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Engendering the GDR: DEFA Cinema 1956-1966

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Abstract

This thesis examines four films made during two key phases in East German film history in the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s which have earned critical acclaim for their challenge to cultural-political orthodoxy and which I read as national narratives offering political, social, cultural and historical constructions of GDR identity. I argue that narrative representations of gender and sexuality serve in the films as a means towards negotiating between affirmation and critique. My analyses are informed by a wide range of other DEFA films.

Chapter One sketches broader political and film-historical contexts. Chapter Two examines the role that gender discourse plays in differentiating East from West in the depiction of the frontier city of Berlin in Gerhard Klein's *Berlin -- Ecke Schönhauser*. Chapter Three focuses on Konrad Wolf's adaptation of Christa Wolf's novel *Der geteilte Himmel*. It shows how the film articulates competing views of the GDR, but instrumentalizes the female character ultimately to endorse socialist society in a divided Germany, and expresses her attachment to this new society in terms of a family-type relationship. Chapter Four examines how Frank Vogel's *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* seeks to mediate between the 'national' past and present, using a triangular family plot. In Chapter Five, the analysis of Frank Beyer's *Spur der Steine* centres upon the role of a lone female in the film's reforming exploration of the overwhelmingly male collective, but shows how it leaves the status of sexuality – whether for pleasure or for reproductive ends – unresolved.

There has been little in-depth study of the way gender representation relates to constructions of the GDR in films of this period. This study remedies this omission, showing how the film-makers frequently rely upon conservative gender paradigms to manage the contradictions implicit in their project and how the endings of the films increasingly come under strain.

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Introduction

The task of creating acceptance for the new state in East Germany was a difficult one. Established in October 1949 in the former Russian occupation zone, the German Democratic Republic's subordinate relationship with the Soviet Union undermined from the outset its claim to be a sovereign entity, and its ruling *Sozialistische Einheitspartei* (SED) lacked any kind of popular mandate. The borders of the GDR did not follow linguistic, ethnic, cultural or topographical boundaries; it was approximately one-third of the size of post-World War Two Germany. One of the more unusual and more problematic features of this new state, which sought to define itself simultaneously as socialist and as German, was that it had been brought into existence at the same time as another Germany. The act of foundation was both an act of national division and a reminder of national shame and defeat.

The population of the GDR was encouraged to put its hope in the future. In this war-torn land, socialism and the collective work effort were depicted as a unifying social force, a means towards material prosperity and a utopian future.¹ The years to come would also, it was argued, bring a reunited Germany, as the success of GDR socialism would convince the West German proletariat to rise up and overthrow capitalism in the Federal Republic. The party continued to portray itself as the advocate of German reunification until the early 1970s, although any concrete aspirations that the SED may have had

¹ Clearly, Marxism-Leninism has a forward-looking trajectory. However, this turn to the future was not only ideologically motivated, but served practical and psychological needs, distracting the population from the troubled past and the shattered state of post-war Germany and getting it to invest its energies in building up the new state.

in this regard faded from the mid-1950s onwards.² Coupled with this forward-looking rhetoric was a strategy to legitimise the new state by constructing continuity with a suitable past. Culturally, the state declared itself to be the sole rightful heir to the humanistic values of German Classicism. The GDR canon was constructed around the works of Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, literature with a broader resonance in the population than, for example, the more politicised left-wing tradition of the Weimar Republic.³ Historically, state propagandists presented the East German state as the outcome of a progressive German political tradition, one which did not stop at the working-class movement of the nineteenth century but stretched back into a more distant past. West Germany, by contrast, was linked with the militaristic-authoritarian strand.⁴ The anti-fascist resistance against Hitler was depicted as the uprising of this 'good' Germany. It served as a heroic, foundational fiction, legitimising the GDR's claim of moral superiority over West Germany.⁵ In addition to these central cultural and historical narratives, a host of symbols and rituals were invented, such as a GDR state emblem, a national anthem, the annual national anniversary and 1 May celebrations, and a social and political initiation rite akin to a secular version of confirmation, the *Jugendweihe*.⁶ In ways typical of

² See Kurt Seliger, 'Die nationale Frage im Spiegel des SED-Marxismus', *Deutschland Archiv*, 7 (1974), 576-581, and Karl Römer, 'Was ist Deutschland?', *Deutschland Archiv*, 8 (1975), 856-866 (p. 864).

³ Manfred Jäger makes this point, but also observes that the SED leadership had grown up with this literary tradition and that its valorization was not merely tactical. See Jäger, *Kultur und Politik in der DDR 1945-1990* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1994), pp. 20-21.

⁴ See Rudolf von Thadden, 'Das schwierige Vaterland', in *Identität der Deutschen: Fragen, Positionen, Perspektiven*, ed. by Werner Weidenfeld (Munich: Hanser, 1983), pp. 49-61 (pp. 54-55), and Wilfried von Bredow, 'Geschichte als Element der deutschen Identität', in *ibid.*, pp. 100-116 (pp. 104-106).

⁵ See Peter C. Pfeiffer, 'The National Identity of the GDR: Antifascism, Historiography, Literature', in *Cultural Transformations in the New Germany: American and German Perspectives*, ed. by Friederike Eigler and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993), pp. 23-41.

⁶ State symbols, like the flag, and rituals, such as the oaths sworn at *Jugendweihe*, did not always remain the same throughout the GDR's history. This drew attention to their invented character and probably lessened their effectiveness. See Albert Döhnert, 'Jugendweihe: Die

national movements, the state sought to foster community by creating historical narratives that constructed continuity with more distant times and by ‘inventing traditions’ that would promote a sense of a GDR past through repetition.⁷

From the outset film, as a medium with potentially the widest popular appeal, was deemed to have a key role in helping win support for the new state, as I shall explore in more depth in the next chapter. Key genres in the building of national identity were anti-fascist films, other historical films about the German past, and *Gegenwartsfilme* (films dealing with the GDR present).⁸ The political leadership and cultural functionaries were particularly sensitive about the depiction of contemporary society. In the early 1950s, in particular, filmmakers at the DEFA film studio had little freedom to decide what images they presented of GDR life. *Gegenwartsfilme* were expected to be positive, even celebratory. Cultural functionaries believed that films that presented the GDR in glowing colours could help, for example, to increase the readiness of young people to defend their country in the event of conflict. In fact, however, the poor dramaturgical quality of these films and their inauthenticity meant that many GDR citizens simply stayed away from the cinemas. As the decade

Familie als Feld der SED-Kirchenpolitik’, in *Parteiauftrag: Ein Neues Deutschland: Bilder, Rituale und Symbole der frühen DDR*, ed. by Dieter Vorsteher (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 1996), pp. 274-286 (p. 284), and Harry D. Schurdel, ‘Die Hoheitssymbole der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik’, in *ibid.*, pp. 44-62 (p. 46).

⁷ See Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 1-14.

⁸ Not only the *Gegenwartsfilm*, but also the anti-fascist film tradition, historical films and adaptations of the GDR’s literary heritage intersected with the GDR’s national narratives. For an overview of DEFA film’s role in promoting historical consciousness, see Heinz Kersten, ‘Entwicklungslinien’, in *Film in der DDR*, ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte, Reihe Film, 13, (Munich: Hanser, 1977), pp. 7-56. For a discussion of the depiction of the anti-fascist past, see Christiane Mückenberger, ‘The Anti-Fascist Past in DEFA Films’, trans. by Margaret Vallance, in *DEFA: East German Cinema 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), pp. 58-76. On the relationship of film to the GDR’s literary heritage, see Harry Blunk, ‘Bemerkungen zur “Erbe”-Aneignung im Spiegel des DEFA-Spielfilms’, *Deutsche Studien*, 98 (1987), 155-168, Daniela Berghahn, ‘The Re-evaluation of Goethe and the Classical Tradition in the films of Egon Günther, and Siegfried Kühn’, in Allan and Sandford, pp. 222-244.

progressed, cultural-political restraints were relaxed somewhat in the wake of liberalisation in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin and domestic unrest. Some film-makers began to allude to social problems and to experiment with different forms and techniques in an attempt to achieve a truly popular cinema. Following a brief period of restoration, prompted by a drifting away from liberalisation in the Soviet Union, a second phase of cultural-political openness began in the early 1960s. This once again ushered in a period of experimentation with narrative styles and filmic idioms. In the mid-1960s a wave of films was produced that was clearly reformist in intention. They took a critical look at the political legacies of Stalinism and the ossification of power structures in the GDR. With the Eleventh Plenum in December 1965 the SED put an end to this phase of quite outspoken critique. This brutal cultural intervention came at the end of a highly unstable period in the GDR's history, as the new state underwent considerable economic and social transformation, changes in self-understanding and cultural-political fluctuation.

My concern is with representations of the German Democratic Republic in four films made during these two phases of cultural-political relaxation in the mid-1950s and in the early to mid-1960s: *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, directed by Gerhard Klein and released in 1957; *Der geteilte Himmel*, directed by Konrad Wolf and released in 1964; *Denk bloß ich nicht, ich heule*, produced by Frank Vogel in 1964/65 but not released until 1990, and Frank Beyer's *Spur der Steine*, withdrawn after a brief run in 1966 and not shown again until 1989. All four seek to explain and to resolve, at least partially, the social ills that they have revealed, basically adhering to the narrative pattern: social division – integration – social unity. In general, they seek to balance criticism with affirmation, highlighting unfavourable aspects of actually existing socialism

and contesting, in varying degrees, official notions of GDR identity, but also attempting to foster identification with the GDR. This dual impetus reflects both the critical partisanship of the film-makers and the restrictions placed upon them by the state. All four directors were committed to the GDR and were firmly convinced that they had a role to play in stimulating its development. Their freedom to exercise this role was, however, heavily circumscribed by the regime, which was plagued with insecurity and often simply sought to deny and repress discontent in the wider population. The party elite attempted to persuade and pressurise film-makers into believing that they should exercise their critique within certain bounds, taking repressive measures when they were adjudged to have exceeded these limits.

My focus is on the role of gender and sexuality in these narratives. Equality for women was one of the central tenets of the GDR's very first constitution and was frequently held up as proof of the progressiveness of East Germany and its superiority over West Germany. Article Seven of the 1949 constitution boldly proclaimed, with an astonishing naiveté judged from today's perspective, 'Mann und Frau sind gleichberechtigt. Alle Gesetze und Bestimmungen, die der Gleichberechtigung der Frau entgegenstehen, sind aufgehoben'. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the integration of nearly all women of working age into the workforce and considerable achievements in fields such as child care, abortion rights and vocational training, the GDR remained a strongly patriarchal society until its demise.⁹ The state and party apparatuses

⁹ On the East German policy of integrating women into the workforce, see Jutta Gysi and Dagmar Meyer, 'Leitbild berufstätige Mutter: DDR-Frauen in Familie, Partnerschaft und Ehe', in *Frauen in Deutschland 1945-1992*, ed. by Gisela Helwig and Hildegard Maria Nickel (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1993), pp. 139-165. For an overview of women's rights legislation in East and West Germany, see Sabine Berghahn, 'Frauen, Recht und langer Atem: Bilanz nach über 40 Jahren Gleichstellungsgebot in Deutschland', in *ibid.*, pp. 71-138. On women's training in the GDR, see Barbara Bertram, "'Nicht zurück an den

were organised hierarchically and commanded by a gerontocracy. In the home, domestic gender roles remained relatively unchanged. The ideological focus upon work, i.e. productive labour, has been largely blamed for this failure to transform gender relations. These are sociological observations whose validity I do not seek to challenge. However, cultural narratives also reflect and constitute notions about gender and sexuality. My interest lies in the intersections between constructions of gender and sexuality and narrative constructions of 'national', collective identity in GDR film.

Theoretical work on nationalism has underlined interrelationships between representations of national identity and certain representations of sexuality and gender. Post-colonial scholar Anne McClintock notes the paradox that 'nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender difference', despite nationalism's rhetorical preoccupation with national 'unity'.¹⁰ The frequent figuring of the nation as a family implicitly depends upon the notion that women and children are subordinate to men. Hence, McClintock speaks of it as 'a "natural" figure for sanctioning national hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests', offering a 'single genesis narrative for national history'.¹¹ At the same time this link between family, ethnicity and the nation valorizes productive heterosexual sexuality and female monogamy. Non-reproductively orientated sexualities

Kochtopf': Aus- und Weiterbildung in Ostdeutschland', in *ibid.*, pp. 191-214. On patriarchal structures in GDR society, see Gert Meyer und Kirsten Rohmeis, "Kontrollierte Emanzipation": Thesen zu Patriarchalismus und Paternalismus im politischen System der DDR', in *Tradition und Fortschritt in der DDR: Neunzehnte Tagung zum Stand der DDR-Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 20. bis 23. Mai 1986* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1986), pp. 102-117.

¹⁰ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 353.

¹¹ McClintock, p. 357.

tend, as a result, to have no place in the discourse of the nation.¹² Etienne Balibar sees the links between family and nation as being so strong that he even wonders whether the nation can survive the disintegration of the family and the removal of sex and childbirth from the genealogical order.¹³ By contrast, George Mosse has examined the implications of nationalism for masculinity and male sexuality. His work found that nationalism was often constructed around a certain form of male bonding, and consequently ‘tended to involve the sharp delineation between acceptable male-male relations, depicted as fraternal in character, and sexualized male relations’.¹⁴

While men have tended to be agents on the national stage, Woman has frequently been used symbolically to stand for the national homeland, or to define the national limits.¹⁵ Foreign invasion, for example, is commonly represented as rape in nationalist discourse. There appears to be a link between this apparent paradox of women’s symbolic instrumentalization and their denial of access to the national public sphere.¹⁶ The privatisation of family space and the rise of a model of the bourgeois family that defined women primarily as mothers and largely confined them to the home perhaps facilitated the metaphorization of women as something spatially static.¹⁷ Woman’s biological function as mother and her confinement to a ‘timeless’ private space explains perhaps, too, the particular relationship of woman to national time identified by McClintock. She argues that gender difference has been

¹² See Andrew Parker and others, ‘Introduction’, in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. by Andrew Parker and others (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-18 (pp. 6-7).

¹³ Etienne Balibar, ‘The Nation Form: History and Ideology’, in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. by Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 86-106 (p. 102).

¹⁴ George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 67.

¹⁵ McClintock, p. 354.

¹⁶ McClintock, p. 354.

¹⁷ I am here drawing upon Rita Felski’s *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

instrumentalized to overcome contradictions within nationalism, for '[w]omen are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity' whereas '[m]en, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity'.¹⁸

While the GDR was a socialist society committed in its constitution to equality between men and women, it was also, in some sense, necessarily a socialist nation.¹⁹ The nationalist aspect of official state discourse, discussed above, and the political structuring of the GDR as a nation-state with a *Volk* co-existed, albeit uneasily, with ideas of proletarian internationalism and class solidarity.²⁰ The regime's attempt to impose a sense of social unity, a common identity delimited by the bounds of a territory, had more in common with nationalism than with humanistic socialism. Furthermore, two central GDR narratives of collective identity were explicitly male orientated. The proletarian culture with which many of the party members had grown up was primarily constructed around a *Männerbund*, and anti-fascism celebrated the heroic feats of the mainly male communist resistance fighters. These were not the only tensions. GDR socialism was informed by an amalgam of various conflicting ideological influences and cultural practices with implicit biases. The political

¹⁸ McClintock, pp. 358-359.

¹⁹ See Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), p. 81. For a brief discussion of issues concerning Marxism and nationalism and the Stalinist doctrine of 'socialism in one country', see Albrecht Martiny, 'Marxismus und die nationale Frage', *Deutschland Archiv*, 8 (1975), 1176-1181 and Wolf Oschlies, 'Nation und die nationale Frage in Osteuropa', *Deutschland Archiv*, 8 (1975), 1181-1189.

²⁰ Mary Fulbrook highlights the survival of the notion of a *Volksgemeinschaft* in the transition from a Nazi dictatorship to the SED state. See Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 19.

ideology of the state placed, on the one hand, an extraordinary faith in technology and modernity, while at the same time having a nostalgic tendency to valorize heavy manual labour. Cultural narratives, including filmic ones, were one of the main arenas where social tensions and contradictions of this kind were played out. This study will examine to what extent gender and sexual stereotypes might have been perpetuated – whether knowingly or unknowingly – in the depiction of the collective, of collective tensions and their resolution, and explore how such stereotyping sought to resolve contradictory national purposes.

My study will begin with a chapter that surveys the broader historical, cultural-political, and film historical contexts. Four main chapters will follow, each dedicated to a textual analysis of one of the four films. Each chapter will have a dual focus, examining both how these films depict the GDR and what role gender and sexuality play in these representations. The individual chapters will be prefaced with an introduction locating each film within its immediate cultural-political context, and detailing, as relevant, production, post-production and reception history. This section will also attempt to assess retrospectively each film's thematic and/or aesthetic significance at the time of production, and the film-maker's intentions. The ensuing textual analysis of each film will be divided into three parts, each with different accents.

The first section will concentrate upon figures and plot, examining the types of characters depicted, how they relate to the imagined community or collective, and how they articulate and/or help to resolve problems of GDR identity within the narrative. Place is the focus of the second section. Here I shall consider what kind of image is presented of the GDR by the choice of particular locales, considering, furthermore, how the construction of space

might express social or economic tensions, or priorities. Furthermore, in the light of the existence of a rival German state, I examine how the films might seek to differentiate the GDR from the West. In addition, I shall pay particular attention to the relationship between 'public' and 'private' spheres. In the third section, my prime concern will be the relationships constructed between the nation-state's past, present and the future. This was a particularly difficult national issue for the GDR because of the German past and because of the problem of socialist teleology that tended to sublimate the present in favour of the future. In keeping with the varied manner in which each film engages with this question, my analyses will centre upon different aspects from film to film, focusing, for example, on the narrative structure, the mode of representation, characters' biographies or symbolic locations as appropriate. The nature of film makes it impossible to make a rigid or mechanical division between the three main categories that structure each chapter. For example, there is a reflexive relationship between figures and space, historical change can be expressed through generation, and place is imbued with time. On occasion, I have, therefore, allowed myself a certain licence in deciding where best to deal with certain boundary-crossing elements.

Before the *Wende*, research on DEFA was quite restricted in scope. The problems of gaining access to the films and to contextual information made it a difficult area of study for Western scholars during the GDR's existence. Such factors made cultural studies-type approaches and close analysis, in particular, difficult, if not impossible.²¹ Moreover, DEFA film did not enjoy a good reputation, dismissed by many in the West as a mere propaganda vehicle of the

²¹ Harry Blunk is one of the few Western pre-*Wende* scholars who engaged in close film analysis. See Blunk, *Die DDR in ihren Spielfilmen: Reproduktion und Konzeption der DDR-Gesellschaft im neueren DEFA-Gegenwartsfilm* (Munich: Profil, 1984).

SED. Even those Western film historians who were not so dismissive were far from exempt from polarised, Cold War thinking. GDR film scholars had greater access to at least some of the films, but also tended to be constrained in their analysis by official cultural-political paradigms. In the main, academic work before the *Wende*, in both East and West, attempted to trace changes in film-making trends in relation to political, economic, social and cultural-political changes in the GDR, or focused upon the development of the work of individual film-makers.

The seismic political changes that brought about the end of the GDR have, however, transformed the field of GDR film studies. In particular, the release in the state's final months of a clutch of films suppressed by the regime more than two decades earlier placed existing film-historical narratives under particular strain. Some even went so far as to imply that the GDR and socialism might even have survived had these so-called 'Rabbit' films, named after Kurt Maetzig's 1965 production *Das Kaninchen bin ich*, been allowed to appear.²² The end of the GDR sparked general questions about the *raison d'être* of GDR film study, as well as calls for new approaches.²³ Research into DEFA films could now no longer be reduced to a means of understanding or interpreting an existing, relatively secretive society. East German film had become part of the contested cultural legacy of a now defunct state.²⁴

Concomitant with these changes, previous practical constraints upon GDR film

²² See Klaus Wischniewski, 'Verbotene Filme: Aufbruch und Absturz: der DEFA-Spielfilm zwischen 1961 und 1966', in *Brüche, Krisen, Wendepunkte: Neubefragung von DDR-Geschichte*, ed. by Jochen Černý (Leipzig: Urania Verlag, 1990), pp. 228-245 (p. 244), and the film-maker Günter Stahnke's comments in 'Es ist zum Heulen', *Berlinale Tip*, 15-21 February 1990.

²³ See Barton Byg 'DEFA and the Traditions of International Cinema', in Allan and Sandford, pp. 22-41, and Karen Ruoff Kramer 'Representations of Work in the Forbidden DEFA films', in *ibid.*, pp. 131-145.

²⁴ See Klaus Finke, ed., *DEFA-Film als nationales Kulturerbe?: Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft 58* (Berlin: Vistas, 2001)

scholarship have been steadily disappearing since the *Wende*. DEFA films are now regularly broadcast on German television, and are being released on video.²⁵ Previously unreleased archival material has also become available. The opening up of archives has permitted scholars a greater insight into what went on behind the scenes in the film studio and in cultural-political agencies, and provided access to film material that had been suppressed by the regime. In 1999, a trust, the *DEFA-Stiftung*, was set up to maintain interest and promote research in the field.

GDR film is still, nevertheless, a relatively under-researched, though developing, field of study. Historian Joshua Feinstein's unpublished dissertation of 1995, which combines analysis of filmic images of the GDR with in-depth research of cultural-political and historical contexts, is an interesting study devoted to some of the films that I will be discussing. It also makes some interesting points about gender discourse. 'The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema: 1956-66' does not, however, focus primarily upon the intersecting constructions of collective and gender identity.²⁶ Most existing scholarship devoted to gender issues tends to focus upon representations of women.²⁷ Most concentrate upon the woman-centred films of the 1970s and 1980s. Some critics note the special role played by women *throughout* DEFA film history, but tend to select examples from the film studio's early years, before jumping to the latter decades of film

²⁵ Icestorm Entertainment and Icestorm International are the independent video distributors for the DEFA film studio's productions.

²⁶ Joshua Feinstein, 'The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema: 1956-66' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1995).

²⁷ See, for example, Gisela Bahr, 'Film and Consciousness: The Depiction of Women in East German Movies', in *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions*, 2 vols., *Gender and Representation in New German Cinema*, ed. by Sandra Frieden and others (Providence: Berg, 1993), I, pp. 125-140, and Andrea Rinke, 'From Models to Misfits: Women in DEFA Films of the 1970s and 1980s', in Allan and Sandford, pp. 183-203.

production.²⁸ There has been little in-depth study of gender representation in either the films of the early to mid 1960s, or those produced in the first period of cultural-political thaw in the mid-fifties.²⁹

This focus upon representations of femininity, alone, is problematic in itself. As early as 1975, the East German critic Regine Sylvester noted the problematic nature of analyses, such as her own, that solely concentrated upon images of women, pointing out that comparable studies of male figures in films would be unthinkable. Sylvester emphasised that such approaches reinforce a view of women as a sub-category of humanity, and man as the universal subject.³⁰ General critical practice has moved on since then. In the 1980s there was a paradigm shift away from old-style descriptive analyses of images of women, to the theorisation of ways that gender is constructed within texts and how representations of gender influence readers or viewers.³¹ Concomitantly, scholars in various fields became increasingly convinced of the need to subject masculinity to closer scrutiny in order to avoid establishing it as something unchanging and monolithic. This tendency is beginning to be reflected, too, in GDR film studies.³² My thesis seeks to consider the significance of representations of both masculinity and femininity in these films.

²⁸ See Harry Blunk, 'Emanzipation der Frau und Frauentag im DDR-Spielfilm', *Deutsche Studien*, 25 (1987), 59-72, and Heinz Kersten, 'The Role of Women in GDR Films since the Early 1970s', *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*, 8 (1988), 47-64.

²⁹ One exception is Annette Strauß, *Frauen im deutschen Film*, Studien zum Theater, Film und Fernsehen, 22 (Frankfurt am Main: Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaft, 1996), who looks at a selection of 1950s East German and West German films.

³⁰ Regine Sylvester, 'Film und Wirklichkeit: Einige Gedanken zu Frauengestalten in neueren Filmen der DEFA und des Fernsehens der DDR' in *Emanzipation der Frau: Wirklichkeit und Illusion: Aus Theorie und Praxis des Films*, Sonderheft, 1975, ed. by Margarete Schmidt (Potsdam: Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen, 1975, pp. 91-108 (p. 91)).

³¹ See Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 143-144.

³² For example, see Barton Byg, 'Nazism as *Femme Fatale*: Recuperations of Masculinity in Postwar Berlin', in *Gender and Germanness: Cultural Productions of Nation*, ed. by Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn, 1997), pp. 176-188, Erica Carter, 'Sweeping up the Past: Gender and History in the Post-war German "Rubble Film"', in *Heroines without Heroes: Reconstructing Female and National Identities in*

As well as providing new readings of four important film texts, this study aims to make a contribution towards overcoming the gaps and omissions in the study of gender in this period of GDR film history and towards the understanding of the intersections between representations of gender and representations of national identity. By teasing out the more deeply embedded meanings of masculinity and femininity in the four films that I will analyse, I will challenge a number of paradigms. My work will call into question a latent tendency to idealise socially and politically critical films made during the two periods of cultural-political détente in DEFA's history under Walter Ulbricht's leadership, and query any tendency to downplay the contradictions in the social and cultural project that their makers were embarked upon. Films that are critical of the political status quo are not necessarily critical of the hidden, deeper gender structures of society – in fact “critical” films may even replicate “traditional” gender roles or attributes. My work will draw attention to the pressure exerted upon figurations of gender by the attempt to balance affirmation and critique. Whether these conflicting impulses were, or indeed even could be, channelled into truly coherent narratives will be a recurring topic in this dissertation. The film-makers' competing desires to revise social values, while contributing to a positive sense of GDR identity, did not necessarily prove to be consonant with a rethinking of gender roles. Thus the ideal of socialism that these films espouse is a rather circumscribed one.

Any claim that a small selection of films such as this is representative is, of course, difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, the discontinuities of

European Cinema 1945-51, ed. by Ulrike Sieglöhr (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 91-112 and Stefan Zahlmann, 'Geregelte Identität: Männlichkeitskonzepte und Partnerschaft im Spielfilm der DDR', in *MannBilder: Ein Lese- und Quellenbuch zur historischen Männerforschung*, ed. by Wolfgang Schmale, Innovationen, 4 (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 1998), pp. 221-266. Kramer also touches upon aspects of masculinity in her article 'Representations'.

DEFA film history, particularly in this period, practically preclude any such assertion. All four standardly feature in DEFA film histories, having tackled taboo subjects, earned critical or popular acclaim in the GDR for aesthetic or thematic reasons, or for having been subjected to measures of official repression. They were all directed by men, generally deemed to belong to the second generation of DEFA film-makers, who started their careers in the 1950s. These four lend themselves particularly well to the kind of analysis I propose because they centre on places, events or issues key to GDR identity. Furthermore, my analyses are informed by viewings of a wide range of other DEFA films, which I shall refer to where appropriate.

Klein's *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is set in the frontier city of Berlin, as the Cold War was beginning to bite but the border was still open. It received popular and critical acclaim for tackling the theme of disaffected youth and for its aesthetic borrowings from Italian neo-realism. Konrad Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* is set in the period running up to and after the building of the Wall in 1961, and was an unexpected success at the box office. Its innovative narrative structure, which drew upon international influences such as *nouvelle vague*, and its engagement with controversial themes made it the subject of critical debate. Vogel's *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* was one of the first films to be banned as a result of the Eleventh Plenum.³³ Generally mentioned in this context and otherwise frequently dealt with only in passing by standard film histories, the film is, however, praised by Christiane Mückenberger for being the 'Rabbit' film that dealt most boldly with the theme of anti-fascism and the breakdown of understanding between the generations.³⁴ It also challenges

³³ Along with Kurt Maetzig's *Das Kaninchen bin ich* it was singled out by Erich Honecker at the Eleventh Plenum as an example of the pernicious tendencies in contemporary film.

³⁴ See Mückenberger, 'The Anti-Fascist Past', p. 73.

official readings of the Classical literary *Erbe*, another central plank of national representation. *Spur der Steine* was the last film to be banned after the Plenum. Centring upon the system's economic inefficiencies and the relationship of the GDR to its Stalinist legacy, Beyer's film became an unexpected hit with the public upon its release in 1989. My analyses do not produce one easy thesis about the social meanings attached to femininity or masculinity in the GDR, or about the relationship of gender, sexuality and collective identity, but they do reveal how deeply intertwined these issues are in narratives which attempt to represent and resolve the tensions of this new society, and in which gender serves subliminally to resolve in imagination what remained unresolved in practice.

Chapter One: Film and Politics in East Germany 1946-1966

The setting up of the East German film industry predated the founding of the German Democratic Republic by more than three years. On 17 May 1946, just over a year after Germany's surrender, the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) officially granted the film company DEFA a licence for film production. Cameras had actually started to roll some months earlier. Director Kurt Maetzig began producing episodes of the news show *Der Augenzeuge* in January of that year, and filming had just got underway on Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, the organisation's first feature film. The company's output in these immediate post-war years is generally lauded by critics. Distinct in some respects from what was to follow, the period, nevertheless, also offers an insight into the role that film was to assume in the GDR and the institutional development of DEFA. In order to provide a framework for my film readings, it is my intention in this chapter to survey the cultural-political context from DEFA's foundation to the Eleventh Plenum in 1965, and simultaneously provide a broadbrush account of social and economic developments within the GDR.

The startling speed with which film-making got off the ground in the East after the war gives a clear indication of the importance attributed to the medium. In the Western zones, by contrast, the industry got off to a slower and much more piecemeal start.³⁵ From the outset, both the Soviets and the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD), which co-opted the eastern *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) in 1946 to form the

³⁵ For a brief account of the varying film policies in the US and Soviet zones, see Christiane Mückenberger, 'The Anti-Fascist Past in DEFA films', trans. by Margaret Vallance, in *DEFA: East German Cinema 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford (New York and London: Berghahn, 1999), pp. 58-76 (p. 60).

Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), saw film as having a vital role to play in the political education of the population. In the highly politicised years of Weimar Germany, left-wing parties had increasingly come to view film as a valuable propaganda tool because of its mass appeal.³⁶ In part, this was in response to developments in the Soviet Union, a country with high illiteracy rates, and in which film, as Lenin once famously proclaimed, was consequently deemed to be the most important art form of all. The speeches given at DEFA's founding ceremony in 1946 also clearly allotted a didactic, propagandistic role to film. At DEFA's founding ceremony SMAD representative Colonel Sergei Tulpanov called film a 'scharfe und mächtige Waffe', and Paul Wandel, head of the *Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung*, spoke in similar terms of 'eine ungeheure Waffe der Volksbeeinflussung', adding '[d]ie Verantwortung der an ihm Schaffenden ist darum groß'.³⁷ Yet this view of film was derived from a rather naïve top-down model of communication, and was not necessarily accompanied by an appreciation of the medium's specific character, or by an appreciation of film as an art form. Film-making expertise was rare among SED party members. The great importance attached to film as a propaganda tool, the party's ignorance of the medium, and the lack of a strong left-wing film tradition upon which to build, were to have long-lasting repercussions for the East German film industry.

During the war, at a meeting of exiled communists in Moscow in September 1944, Hans Rodenberg, who became director of DEFA for a spell in

³⁶ In 1925, in a brochure entitled 'Erobert den Film! Winke aus der Praxis für die Praxis proletarischer Filmpropaganda', Willi Münzenberg described film as the 'wirkungsvollste Mittel der Agitation und Propaganda', which had been almost entirely surrendered into the hands of the enemy. See Anton Kaes, 'Film in der Weimarer Republik: Motor der Moderne', in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, ed. by Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), pp. 39-100 (p. 77).

³⁷ Cited by W. Gersch, 'Die Anfänge des DEFA-Spielfilms', in *Film- und Fernsehkunst der DDR: Traditionen, Beispiele, Tendenzen*, Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Konrad Wolf Potsdam-Babelsberg (Berlin/East: Henschel, 1979), pp. 87-111 (p. 89).

the 1950s, had already highlighted the KPD's inexperience in the field.³⁸ He was one of the few participants at the gathering, which had been convened to consider the reshaping of German culture after the Nazis' defeat, who had any knowledge of film. Hitler had crushed Germany's fledgling left-wing film industry upon his accession to power in the early thirties, and exiled left-wing film-makers had faced more difficulties continuing their work abroad than their literary counterparts. Given the absence of a flourishing film culture, some participants, such as Maxim Vallentin, proposed that literature should serve as a model for film. His recommendation also reflects the strong regard that the German literary tradition enjoyed among leading exponents of cultural policy, as well as the strong influence of Socialist Realism and the popularity of Georg Lukács's literary theories on realism.³⁹ Some time later Socialist Realism was to be declared binding for film and other cultural forms in the GDR. At this point, however, no firm decisions were made about the future shape of film policy; Rodenberg concluded that both content and character of film would have to be determined after the end of the war.⁴⁰

When peace came, film policy, such as it was, was directed primarily towards overcoming fascism. At the film company's founding ceremony, Colonel Tulpanov defined its most crucial task as the 'Kampf um den demokratischen Aufbau Deutschlands und die Ausrottung der Reste des

³⁸ From 1928 to 1936 Rodenberg headed *Meshrabpom Film*, a film production studio in Moscow founded by the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (IAH), a communist aid organisation set up to help the USSR.

³⁹ Socialist Realism was originally literature-based, emerging from the First Pan-Soviet Writers' Congress of 1934, and Lukács' theories were based around the paradigm of the realist novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. GDR Socialist Realism was strongly influenced by Lukács' writings.

⁴⁰ See Thomas Heimann, DEFA, *Künstler und SED-Kulturpolitik: Zum Verhältnis von Kulturpolitik und Filmproduktion in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1959: Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft* 46 (Berlin: Vistas, 1994), p. 26.

Nazismus und des Militarismus aus dem Gewissen eines jeden Deutschen'.⁴¹ In his speech, Wandel said film should impart energy and strength and prick the people's conscience rather than act as an 'Opium des Vergessens'.⁴² While the anti-fascist impetus was no doubt genuine, this cultural-political course was also motivated by pragmatic considerations. Although the *Filmaktiv*, the group set up in October 1945 to work towards the establishment of DEFA, was made up exclusively of KPD members, the film-making personnel working in the Soviet zone were by no means all card-carrying communists, or even necessarily living in the East.⁴³ A more politicised film policy was unlikely to have met with their support, or to have been tolerated by the Allies at this stage when the future of Germany was still uncertain.

In the immediate post-war period themes were not laid down by decree. A number of film-makers were eager to explore creatively what they had personally experienced during the Third Reich. Stylistically, too, directors and scriptwriters had scope for individual initiative, for no real consensus existed about the aesthetic direction that post-war film should take. Only the lush, melodramatic *Ufa*-style of the Nazi period was generally rejected out of hand for its dishonesty, its pathos and its distorted presentation of social problems.⁴⁴ At the *Erster Deutscher Film-Autoren-Kongreß*, a conference for film-makers from East and West, in June 1947, director Kurt Maetzig expressed concern that many film-makers had not yet departed from the 'alten Bahnen des Illusionfilms' (though, in fact, his own 1947 production *Ehe im Schatten* also

⁴¹ Cited by Christiane Mückenberger, 'Zeit der Hoffnungen: 1946 bis 1949'. in *Das zweite Leben*, pp. 9-50 (p. 14).

⁴² Cited by Gersch, 'Die Anfänge', p. 90.

⁴³ Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 11.

⁴⁴ See Mückenberger, 'The Anti-Fascist Past', pp. 64-65, and Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 26.

reveals traces of *Ufa* style).⁴⁵ He called instead for films that would bring clarity and shed light.⁴⁶ Opinions diverged over the aesthetic best suited for a project that was being defined in essentially Enlightenment terms. German Expressionism, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, German proletarian cinema, 1920s Soviet cinema, and contemporary international trends in realism were among the models suggested, and, in part, emulated.⁴⁷

Cultural-political interventions were low-key in this period. Christiane Mückenberger describes the immediate post-war years as being characterised by 'a natural alliance between artists and politicians', arguing that the anti-fascist programme of the early years coincided with the desire of a number of directors to come to terms with their own past.⁴⁸ By contrast, Thomas Heimann paints a rather less harmonious picture of these years, describing the relationship between politicians and film-makers as fragile.⁴⁹ Whatever the exact temperature of relations, film-makers were indisputably subject to political controls from the start. One of the reasons for the absence of any film bans in the immediate post-war years was, as Mückenberger concedes, the exercise of Soviet influence over individual film projects from their inception.⁵⁰ In August 1945, the SMAD had ordered the establishment of a propaganda and censorship department. One of its tasks was to scrutinise film production. At first these censorship mechanisms seem to have functioned on a relatively informal basis. Differences of opinion between film-makers and representatives of the occupying forces tended to get ironed out in personal

⁴⁵ Cited by Gersch, 'Die Anfänge', p. 92.

⁴⁶ Cited by Gersch, 'Die Anfänge', p. 92.

⁴⁷ See Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 26, and Gersch, 'Die Anfänge', p. 92.

⁴⁸ Mückenberger, 'The Anti-Fascist Past', p. 60.

⁴⁹ Heimann, p. 62.

⁵⁰ Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 22.

discussions, and modifications suggested by the Soviet side do not appear to have necessarily been regarded as binding.⁵¹

The SED, formed in April 1946, played at first only an advisory role. DEFA films were evaluated by a central cultural committee of the party, set up by the SED *Zentralsekretariat* on 4 July 1946, which offered film-makers advice about how to improve their films' public effectiveness. The party did not act initially as a censoring instance, but the coming years saw the SED steadily tighten its grip over what was to remain East Germany's sole film company right up to the collapse of the regime in 1989. The reorganisation of DEFA in November 1947 gave the party far more say over film production, while also giving the Soviets a 55 per cent stake in the company. The German and Soviet camps agreed that both rough cuts and completed films, as well as the company's production plans, should henceforth be presented to a select committee that would be constituted by the SED *Zentralsekretariat*, but form an integral part of the film company itself. Moreover, another committee, the *Filmkommission*, later known as the *DEFA-Kommission*, was also set up primarily to work in co-operation with the SED's *Zentralvorstand* in deciding key personnel issues within DEFA.⁵² In October 1948 the SED's *Zentralsekretariat* replaced DEFA's existing directors with members of the party apparatus.⁵³ In 1949 Sepp Schwab was appointed as director, and one of his first acts was to order the re-editing and refilming of parts of Wolfgang Staudte's *Der Untertan*.⁵⁴ With hardliners now at the helm and a formalised

⁵¹ Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 22.

⁵² See Seán Allan, 'DEFA: An Historical Overview', in Allan and Sandford, pp.1-21 (p. 4) and Mückenberger, 'Zeit', pp. 24-25.

⁵³ Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 25.

⁵⁴ Wolfgang Staudte's film had sparked objections because its anti-authoritarian, pacifist message was at odds with the party's efforts to build up a *Volkspolizei* at the time.

structure of censorship in place, DEFA was about to enter one of its most prescriptive phases.

The period from the setting up of the GDR in 1949 to the Eleventh Plenum in 1965 tends to be divided typically into four main phases characterised by alternations between hardline cultural-political control and ideological relaxation in response to the changing domestic and international situation. Concomitantly, there was a series of changes in key personnel and in the structural organisation of the film studio and its supervisory agencies. Some of these modifications reflected attempts to address industry-related problems, such as low studio output, poor box office figures, or discontent within the studio. Others resulted from fluctuations in cultural policy. Despite the existence of supervisory mechanisms, film bans were periodically imposed, reflecting differences of opinion among functionaries, structural weaknesses within the supervisory system or sharp about-turns in policy. The inevitable time lapse between the conception and the completion of film projects meant that some found themselves out of step with the official line by the time of release. The first ban came in 1951 with *Das Beil von Wandsbek* and the practice continued into the 1980s.⁵⁵ The most drastic intervention occurred in the wake of the Eleventh Plenum. The contemporary focus of the *Gegenwartsfilm* meant that it generally ran the greatest risk of offending party sensibilities, and was particularly susceptible to fall foul of sudden changes of

⁵⁵ Occasionally such banned films would be released years later. For example, Falk Harnack's film *Das Beil von Wandsbek* was released in a censored version in 1962, eleven years after its scheduled release, and in its uncut form in 1981 on the occasion of the main protagonist Erwin Geschonneck's 75th birthday. Konrad Wolf's *Gegenwartsfilm*, *Sonnensucher*, was banned in 1958, but was screened in 1972. In 1987 and 1988 three films re-emerged. In 1987 *Die Russen kommen*, directed by Heiner Carow and produced in 1968, was retrieved from the archives, and in 1988 Rainer Simon's *Jadup und Boel*, produced in 1980/1, was released along with a fragmentary version of Gerhard Klein's halted 1965 production *Berlin um die Ecke*. In 1989 a number of the films suppressed in the Eleventh Plenum began to be screened.

political tack. Such an uncertain climate was not conducive to the establishment of a new film tradition.

The signs of the first shift in film policy came with the creeping onset of the Cold War and the deepening divisions between East and West Germany. In the late 1940s the SED started to lay the foundations for the economic restructuring of the system. It saw film as having a key role in supporting this process. At a meeting of the *Zentralsekretariat* of the SED in summer 1948, the role of culture in promoting the work ethic was emphasised. One participant even remarked: 'Wenn wir keine Filme über den 5-Jahrplan drehen, weiß ich nicht, was wir überhaupt drehen sollen.'⁵⁶ The party still clearly regarded the medium primarily as a tool for the political education of the population but it had begun to set a new syllabus. Building up support for a new order rather than denazification, was now the chief objective. Film-makers, who had been largely concentrating upon the recent past, were urged to turn their attention to the changes going on in the present. Among the problems they faced was the gap between official rhetoric and reality, and the double-edged character of the party's exercise of power.

The establishment of the GDR in 1949 heralded the beginning of a full-scale transformation of the state to Soviet-style socialism. Politically, the SED set about establishing what was effectively a one-party state. In its command structure the party was rigidly hierarchical and disciplined, and its top-down organisation was mirrored in the centralised state apparatus. It did not shy away from using coercion against dissenters within its own ranks or in society at large, but cast itself as a democratic force. The SED's theory of democracy, however, was based upon the Marxist-Leninist idea that the party had a

⁵⁶ Cited by Mückenberger, 'Zeit', p. 25.

vanguard role, and was the only force capable of bringing about the liberation of the working classes and the freedom and equality of all.⁵⁷ As Mary Fulbrook observes, the regime was inspired by a curious mixture of paternalism and paranoia.⁵⁸ On the one hand, it genuinely desired to improve the lot of the majority of the population, but on the other, it recognised its lack of popular support and was obsessed with defending its own power. This was often cast in terms of finding and repressing the 'class enemy'. Economically, efforts in this period were concentrated upon continuing to build up a centralised, state-owned command economy. Particular emphasis was placed upon the building up of heavy industry, which was regarded as the powerhouse of the GDR economy. Industrial workers and construction workers became the heroes of this new order, a status reflected in many films. But their status came at a price. Punishingly high productivity targets were imposed in some sectors. Under this new command economy, not only steel workers were expected to adhere to the plan. Film-makers too, were expected to fulfil production quotas, making films to illustrate prescribed themes.

The topics that film-makers were urged to focus upon were based upon the cornerstones of the SED's publicly proclaimed policies. They were called upon to support the struggle for German unity, for a just peace and for an increase in productivity and improvement in living standards, to oppose anti-Soviet agitation, and to address the problems of the workers' movement, the younger generation and the women's movement.⁵⁹ As well as the difficulties of turning a list of political desiderata into entertaining and credible films, film-

⁵⁷ Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), p. 81.

⁵⁸ Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 22-23.

⁵⁹ See Heimann, p. 100.

makers were confronted with considerable aesthetic restraints. From the late forties onwards categories associated with the doctrine of Socialist Realism, such as 'typicality' and the 'positive hero', were increasingly being used by cultural functionaries to evaluate film production, although Socialist Realism was not named as the guiding principle in the arts until the fifth conference of the SED's *Zentralkomitee* in 1951.⁶⁰ Cultural-political discourse in these years was also accompanied by debates about formalism. Modernist traditions, such as Expressionism, were vilified and depicted as morally corrupting. The nebulousness of both terms, the lack of clarity about what the party actually wanted, as well as the inconsistencies of cultural policy in these years, caused film-makers' confidence to ebb, and annual production to sink.⁶¹ A shortage of personnel deemed politically suitable to produce socially relevant films also contributed to the production shortfall. In 1952 the DEFA feature film studio turned out only six films – just over half the output of 1949. Thematically, the majority tended to focus upon the process of social transformation or upon West German attempts to undermine the GDR.

The crisis in production prompted a slight loosening of the cultural-political corsets, and at the beginning of 1953 a debate about film started in the columns of the party organ *Neues Deutschland*. The discussion, which focused on the absence of love interest in DEFA films, was fairly rudimentary, but it turned attention to the function of film as entertainment and the difficulties of attracting an audience with bluntly didactic films. Until then there had been little thought spared for the role of the audience in the communicative process. One reader of *Neues Deutschland* in February 1953, Margarete John, argued

⁶⁰ Heimann, p. 96.

⁶¹ See Ralf Schenk, 'Mitten im kalten Krieg: 1950 bis 1960', in *Das zweite Leben*, pp. 51-158 (p. 64).

that the affective power of love would make films more appealing to viewers and more effectively able to convey the state's ideological message, urging: 'An der Liebe ist der Mensch zu packen! Da ist jeder interessiert! Wenn wir die Kräfte der Gefühlswelt verstehen für uns zu erschließen, haben wir viel gewonnen.'⁶² By contrast, film critic Rolf Behrendt, writing in *Neue Filmwelt* in July 1953, mocked existing attempts to pep up workplace narratives with bolted-on love stories in such films as Eduard Kubat's 1953 production *Jacke wie Hose*, a standard type of 'love on the job' film of this time, commenting:

Ich würde mich nicht wundern, wenn in dem Film Hilde ihrem Mann bei der Hochzeit einen Vortrag über Neuerermethoden halten würde...Warum zeigt man immer nur den Menschen als Funktionär oder im Betrieb? In *Jacke wie Hose* fehlt das Menschliche, das Private. Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, daß die Rede immer nur vom Betrieb und von Planerfüllung ist, besonders bei Liebenden wie Hilde und Ernst.⁶³

Behrendt's contribution draws attention to the impoverished notion of the individual and of interpersonal relations propagated in these films, and reveals his dissatisfaction with the crude propaganda being produced in the film studios at the time. Director Kurt Maetzig also called into question the popular appeal of DEFA love films that sought to combine business with pleasure, saying the public did not want 'die Geschichte einer Aktivistenbrigade, bei deren glücklichem Abschluß auch ein junges Paar sich findet [...]'.⁶⁴ The director subsequently became one of the leading voices for change in the studio under the New Course announced in July 1953.

The New Course was the regime's response to the workers' uprising of 17 June 1953, an expression of popular dissent triggered by the imposition of

⁶² Cited by Heinz Kersten, *Das Filmwesen in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands*, rev. 2nd edn (Bonn: Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, 1963), p. 81.

⁶³ Cited by Kersten, *Filmwesen*, p. 80.

⁶⁴ Cited by Kersten, *Filmwesen*, p. 81.

higher productivity quotas in some industries. The unrest was also linked to wider dissatisfaction with the SED's failure to relax its economic and political policies in line with an easing up in the Soviet Union following Stalin's death in March 1953. This workers' revolt was put down only with the help of Soviet forces. Badly shaken, Ulbricht, nevertheless, used the incident to consolidate his position of power, managing to garner Soviet support to purge opponents within the party leadership. At the same time he made a number of limited social and economic concessions to appease the populace. In this period the DEFA film studio, too, gained more room for manoeuvre, and production began to climb. In August 1953, Herrmann Axen, while underscoring the primarily legitimising role of film, also called upon film-makers to criticise impediments to social development, urging 'Geißeln Sie mit Scherz und Satire Bürokratismus und Trägheit!'.⁶⁵ In the years to follow, film-makers were to explore increasingly both the function of film as entertainment and as a forum for social critique.

Maetzig's 'Zehn Thesen zum Neuen Kurs in der Filmkunst', presented in February 1954 at a meeting of the *Akademie der Künste*, became something akin to the film-makers' New Course manifesto.⁶⁶ In the document, he stressed the need for far greater thematic and generic diversity, and called for films with greater emotional resonance. At the same time, the director urged critics and functionaries to be more restrained and more constructive in their critique, particularly of the *Gegenwartsfilm*, and he appealed for less draconian film censorship, arguing that bans should only be imposed if films endangered national unity or peace. Furthermore, he suggested personnel and production

⁶⁵ Cited by Schenk, 'Mitten', pp. 73-73.

⁶⁶ See Kurt Maetzig, *Filmarbeit: Gespräche, Reden, Schriften*, ed. by Günter Agde (Berlin: Henschel, 1987), pp. 249-250.

shortfalls in the studio could be addressed by collaborating with politically committed West German film-makers and staging international co-productions. For a brief period Babelsberg did collaborate with the West.⁶⁷ Cinema programmes were also partly filled with Western imports, most notably from France and Italy. In turn this contact with international film fed into the work of East German film-makers. Film-making in these years was considerably more diverse than at the start of the decade, and there were a number of forays into light entertainment. However, with the growing intensification of the Cold War in the mid 1950s, the employment of West German directors increasingly came under fire, and the West German government intervened to block co-productions. Production also continued to be hindered by censorship, revealing underlying unease in some quarters about the shift towards a more popular and less overtly didactic cinema. The *Gegenwartsfilm* remained more subject to stringent scrutiny than other types of film, and as a result many script writers were loath to turn their attention to the present, even after the announcement of the New Course.⁶⁸

In 1956 there was a renewed push for reform in the studios, and the year saw a flurry of output as film-makers glimpsed a window of opportunity. They also took advantage of the uncertain political climate, following Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's policies at the Twentieth CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) Congress in February of that year, and continuing official dissatisfaction with film production figures to air their dissatisfaction about bureaucratic impediments to their work and call for liberalisation. The laborious film approval process was attacked for being

⁶⁷ On the policy towards co-productions in this era, see Schenk, 'Mitten', pp. 86-101.

⁶⁸ Heimann, p. 217.

inefficient, and film-makers complained that their lack of independence was stifling the creative process.⁶⁹ Alongside demands for structural reform came renewed calls for a rethinking of the role of GDR film. At an extraordinary meeting of the studio's party organisation in June 1956, director Kurt Maetzig spoke of the people's desire for entertainment and took issue with the party's belief that the audience could be taught political lessons directly through art.⁷⁰ At a party meeting a few days later, director Herbert Ballmann attacked the use of film to convey the politics of the day to the population. As a film-maker, he claimed the right to highlight deficits in GDR society, exclaiming:

Selbstverständlich werde ich nicht aufhören, den unmenschlichen Krieg anzugreifen, deshalb aber nicht vergessen, das, was bei uns unmenschlich und unhuman [sic] ist, anzuklagen. Wir müssen das gute Gewissen unseres Volkes sein.⁷¹

One cultural functionary working in the *Kulturabteilung* of the ZK disapprovingly noted that many film-makers' views about film and its role in society radically diverged from those of the party.⁷²

The emergence of a new generation of DEFA directors, including Gerhard Klein, Konrad Wolf and Frank Beyer, had brought fresh impulses into the studio in this period.⁷³ Born between 1920 and 1932, these men had been teenagers or young adults at the time of the GDR's foundation. Some of them had learnt their craft in other Eastern bloc countries and been influenced by the spirit of reform afoot there. Many of their debut films focused upon contemporary subjects, reflecting their desire to help shape the new socialist

⁶⁹ For a detailed analysis of the situation in the DEFA studio in 1956/7, see Heimann, pp. 255 ff.

⁷⁰ Heimann, p. 274.

⁷¹ Cited in Heimann, p. 275.

⁷² See Heimann, p. 280.

⁷³ Frank Vogel entered the studio slightly later than the others, making his debut film, *Klotz am Bein*, in 1958.

order. Two of the men who joined the studio in the 1950s, director Gerhard Klein and scriptwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase, were to make some of the most popular contemporary productions of this era. Their Berlin films, *Alarm im Zirkus*, *Eine Berliner Romanze* and *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, were set in authentic milieus in the capital city and were clearly influenced by Italian neo-realism.⁷⁴ The films represented an attempt to make a new type of cinema that was not so far removed from people's everyday lives. Later these films particularly were to be criticised.

Zentralkomitee secretary Paul Wandel's condemnation in May 1957 of practically the entire output planned for that year marked the beginning of the turning of the ideological tide. As the Soviet Union drifted away from its de-Stalinisation course after the upheavals in Poland and Hungary, hardliners gradually were able to regain control.⁷⁵ Wandel criticised DEFA's film-makers for failing to deal with what he saw as themes of central social importance, such as the National People's Army (NVA), and instead for concentrating upon 'extreme sides' of GDR society: young people in *Jugendwerkhöfe*, or refugee camps.⁷⁶ The Second Film conference in July 1958 represented the culmination of this process of retrenchment. Film-makers' efforts to link up with new developments in international film in East and West, as well as with pre-war German film traditions, which had been eyed suspiciously by some factions at the time, were now openly slated.⁷⁷ Alexander Abusch, state secretary and

⁷⁴ *Alarm im Zirkus* was produced in 1954 and *Eine Berliner Romanze* in 1956.

⁷⁵ Heimann stresses the fluid nature of the return to stricter cultural-political controls. He suggests that this gradual transition reveals both differences of opinion within various branches of the cultural apparatus and a lack of a clear division of powers between the various state bodies involved in supervising film production. See Heimann, p. 290.

⁷⁶ See Heimann, p. 302, and Schenk, 'Mitten', p. 132.

⁷⁷ For example, in a report believed to have been written in the summer of 1956 Arno Röder, a functionary working in the *Kulturabteilung* of the ZK, noted disapprovingly that even though the film-makers had welcomed the resolutions of the 20th Communist Party Congress of the Soviet Union and the 3rd Party Congress, they had been more concerned with fighting against

deputy minister for culture, demanded a return to Socialist Realism and the norms of the early 1950s. He censured *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, in particular, attacking its neorealist aesthetic, which he described as fundamentally inappropriate to depict the allegedly non-antagonistic contradictions of GDR's socialist system.⁷⁸ Socialist Realism, by contrast, was represented as the only method for revealing progressive social trends. In addition, the opening of the studio to the West in the previous few years was also heavily criticised, and subsequently moves were made to remove film staff living in the West.

On the whole, there was relatively little opposition within the studio to the party's moves to curb film-makers' freedoms once more. Maetzig accepted in full the party's critique at the film conference.⁷⁹ Konrad Wolf had already given his full backing to Ackermann in March 1957.⁸⁰ Another director Heiner Carow later described this lack of resistance, telling Ralf Schenk in 1993:

Die Filmkonferenz war meine erste Konfrontation mit solchen Dingen. Wir haben lange Zeit versucht zu glauben, irgendwas muß ja dran sein, wenn die uns so kritisieren [...] Slatan Dudow hat irgendwann mal zu mir gesagt: Es war ein Fehler, wir haben geschwiegen. – Bei uns ist sehr viel geschwiegen worden.⁸¹

The director of the Berlin films was one of the few to break the silence.⁸² Klein tried to defend his work against Abusch's critique, but he, too, finally retracted central points of his statement, pledging unconditional support for the readjusted cultural-political strategy of the SED alongside scriptwriter

dogmatism and for intra-party democracy than with what he called the important central political questions. Moreover, he reported that reforms intended to help the meeting of the Five-Year Plan had been misread as a move to ease the pressure from above and as a step towards personal freedom. See Heimann, p. 275 and p. 286.

⁷⁸ Alexander Abusch, 'Aktuelle Probleme und Aufgaben unserer sozialistischen Filmkunst', *Deutsche Filmkunst*, 6 (1958), 261-270.

⁷⁹ Heimann, p. 313.

⁸⁰ Heimann, p. 314.

⁸¹ Schenk, 'Mitten', pp. 137-138.

⁸² Heimann, p. 305.

Wolfgang Kohlhaase.⁸³ The episode reveals how easily at this time filmmakers could be brought into line by arguments that their work was endangering national security and by the implicit threat of removal from the studio. The cultural-political shift of 1957/8 led to the scrapping of a number of films that had been in various stages of production, and a reorientation of the thematic plans.

In the period from 1959 to 1961 the *Gegenwartsfilm* dominated statistically, but quality was poor and these films came under increasing attack for being schematic. Many of the more promising young directors had turned to anti-fascist themes, hoping that the genre might offer a little more room for manoeuvre. Box office doldrums and DEFA's poor showing at a film conference of the Eastern bloc countries in Sofia in November 1960 appear to have convinced the film company's studio management at least of the need for change.⁸⁴ This was not only a bad time for film. Politically, the SED's intensification of its drive to collectivise agriculture and appropriate those businesses still in private hands prompted another rise in the numbers of people leaving the GDR at the beginning of the new decade.⁸⁵ In the first half of 1961 alone, 159,730 citizens fled the GDR, bringing the number of people who had left the state since 1949 to a total of just under 2.7 million. On 13 August 1961 the government moved to close the last open frontier with the West, paradoxically ushering in another period of relative liberalisation in the DEFA film studios and in the land as a whole.

The Wall was a drastic measure designed to secure the party's and the state's survival. In its wake there was clearly need for a degree of

⁸³ Heimann, pp. 313-314.

⁸⁴ Kersten, *Filmwesen*, p. 47.

⁸⁵ See Christoph Kleßmann, *Zwei Staaten, eine Nation: Deutsche Geschichte 1955-1970* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1988), p. 318, p. 321, p. 558.

rapprochement. After the social and economic upheavals of the 1950s, the 1960s were a time of modification and consolidation. Politically, the harsh Stalinist tones of the 1950s gave way to a somewhat more conciliatory, inclusive style. There were reforms in the areas of law and education, and a number of communiqués issued in this period also reflect a partial change in tack on the part of the SED leadership. For example, the youth communiqué called upon the older generation to show greater tolerance and understanding towards the younger generation. The issue of emancipation was raised in a document entitled ‘Die Frau, der Frieden und der Sozialismus’.⁸⁶ Primarily, the communiqué was concerned with standards of women’s professional qualifications that were still much lower than men’s. In the economic sphere, the party sought to quell discontent about lower living standards by placing more emphasis upon the production of consumer goods and attempted to address the widening gap between the performance of the East and West German economies with a programme of modernisation.

In 1963 a new, less centralised, system of planning, called the *Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung* (NÖSPL), was introduced. Factories were now allowed more say in their own running, and technocrats were elevated to positions of higher responsibility in the party apparatus. The new economic programme sparked a drive to raise standards in education and training, particularly in the sciences and technical subjects, as the GDR embarked upon what it dubbed the *wissenschaftlich-technische Revolution*. There were special initiatives aimed at women, and educational discrimination against the traditional social elites was relaxed. DEFA was not exempted from

⁸⁶ See Kleßmann, *Zwei Staaten*, p. 362 and Hermann Weber, *Die DDR: 1945-1990*, rev. 2nd edn (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), p. 59.

the reorganisation going on in the economy as a whole. From 1961 onwards production began to be decentralised. The changes were based on a proposal, first made by Kurt Maetzig in the previous period of cultural thaw, that had been dropped with the hardening of ideological fronts. Small teams of directors, scriptwriters, technicians and cultural functionaries were given a large degree of independence in the initiation and execution of film projects.

The beginning of the 1960s saw not only structural change, but also a change of mood in the studio. Paradoxically, many of the cultural intelligentsia perceived the building of the Wall as facilitating more openness. At a party meeting in the DEFA film studio in 1962 the author Christa Wolf argued:

Wir stehen augenblicklich auf einem Punkt, wo es die Entwicklung fordert, die Grenzen, die dem Humanismus in bestimmten Klassensituationen gesetzt sind, gesetzt sein müssen, zu erweitern – in weit höherem Maße, als wir es bisher glaubten, tun zu können. Der 13. August ermöglichte es uns, die Grenzen in unserem eigenen Lande, in unserem Innern, in der Diskussion mit unseren Menschen, in der Arbeit mit Ihnen, auszudehnen.⁸⁷

Many film-makers seem to have shared her belief that they could now focus on internal problems without running the risk of undermining or damaging the state, or being accused of doing this. By underlining the (ostensible) permanence of German division the Wall had also strengthened the notion of a separate GDR cultural identity. Three months after its construction, Culture Minister Alexander Abusch declared: '[Man] darf nicht mehr verschwommen und verwaschen von der deutschen Kultur im allgemeinen sprechen; eine solche einheitliche Kultur kann in beiden deutschen Staaten mit

⁸⁷ Cited by Heinz Klunker, 'Nachdenken über Manfred H. : *Der geteilte Himmel* '85 wiedergesehen', *epd Film*, 6 (1985), 23-25 (p. 24).

entgegengesetzter Entwicklung gegenwärtig nicht existieren.’⁸⁸ Nevertheless, for a brief period a greater openness to foreign cultural trends was tolerated in the studio, as evinced, for example, by the allusions to *nouvelle vague* in Konrad Wolf’s *Der geteilte Himmel*, which I shall discuss below. DEFA film-makers and functionaries cited a diverse range of foreign influences in their responses to a questionnaire published in the second issue of *film-wissenschaftliche mitteilungen* of 1965, which was subsequently banned by the authorities.⁸⁹

The renewed drive towards more aesthetic and generic experimentation makes it difficult to characterise film production in this period, as Erika Richter indicates.⁹⁰ Comedy and light entertainment certainly enjoyed something of a boom in the early 1960s. Frank Beyer’s *Karbid und Sauerampfer* and Ralf Kirsten’s *Auf der Sonnenseite* were probably among the best.⁹¹ Towards the mid-1960s there was a turn towards the increasingly socially critical *Gegenwartsfilm*, as film-makers turned a critical eye upon the achievements of social and economic reform in the GDR. As Richter notes, Kurt Maetzig’s *Das Kaninchen bin ich* focuses upon the justice system, Günter Stahnke’s *Der Frühling braucht Zeit* takes a critical look at structures within state-owned industry, while Herrmann Zschoche’s *Karla* raises questions about the education system.⁹² Furthermore, the two banned films that I will analyse,

⁸⁸ Cited by Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1981), p. 127.

⁸⁹ On the ban of the issue in which these findings appeared, see Heinz Baumert, ‘Das verbotene Heft: *film-wissenschaftliche mitteilungen* 2/1965’, in *Kahlschlag: Das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED: Studien und Dokumente*, ed. by Günther Agde (Berlin: Aufbau, 1991), pp. 189-200.

⁹⁰ Erika Richter, ‘Zwischen Mauerbau und Kahlschlag: 1961 bis 1965’, in *Das zweite Leben*, pp. 159-212 (p. 159).

⁹¹ *Karbid und Sauerampfer*, director Frank Beyer, 1963; *Auf der Sonnenseite*, director Ralf Kirsten, 1962.

⁹² *Das Kaninchen bin ich*, director Kurt Maetzig, 1965; *Der Frühling braucht Zeit*, director Günter Stahnke, YP. 1965, YR. 1990; *Karla*, director Herrmann Zschoche, YP. 1965/1966, YR. 1990.

Frank Vogel's *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and Frank Beyer's *Spur der Steine*, also deal, along with a number of other issues, with problems in GDR schools and industry respectively. This attempt to produce a different kind of cinema that was not afraid to address the problems of the population was simultaneously an attempt to find a new niche for cinema, which was coming under increasing pressure from television.⁹³

The intervention of the party at the Eleventh Plenum and in the months thereafter called a halt to this development. Various arguments have been advanced to explain the reasons for the severity – in terms of both scale and tone – of this backlash. Some argue it was a manoeuvre designed to distract from the failure of the economic reform programme. Others link the step to the removal of Khrushchev from power in the previous year and Ulbricht's newly-found confidence that he could return to more conservative policies. The open denunciation of *Das Kaninchen bin ich* and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* at the Eleventh Plenum in December 1965 led DEFA management and cultural functionaries to re-evaluate feverishly the films currently showing and films in production. Stahnke's *Der Frühling braucht Zeit* was immediately withdrawn, and a host of other projects were broken off one after another. Only in the case of *Spur der Steine* was it necessary for the party leadership to intervene again.⁹⁴ Of the planned 1966 output, only three children's films, the first DEFA Indian film and four other feature films survived the purge.⁹⁵ Nevertheless the film-going public, Wischniewski observes, hardly noticed the cull, as gaps in the programme were quickly plugged with old and new imports.⁹⁶

⁹³ Richter, 'Zwischen', p. 194.

⁹⁴ Richter, 'Zwischen', p. 197.

⁹⁵ Klaus Wischniewski, 'Träumer und gewöhnliche Leute: 1966 bis 1979', in *Das zweite Leben*, pp. 213-264 (p. 213).

⁹⁶ Wischniewski, 'Träumer', p. 214.

The intervention had a rather more tangible effect on those involved in the film industry and on future film production. Top cultural functionaries, including the culture minister and the film minister, members of the studio management, a number of film-makers and several academics involved with the film journal *film-wissenschaftliche mitteilungen* were removed from their posts.⁹⁷ Stahnke and Wolfgang Böttcher, director of the innovative, rather existentialist 1966 production *Jahrgang 45*, were never to work as feature film directors again. Beyer was forced to leave the studio for several years. Klein, who had directed the banned *Berlin um die Ecke*, a later addition to his Berlin series, and Vogel remained in the studio, but made a gesture of obeisance by each making an episode of the four-part *Geschichten jener Nacht*, a rather uninspiring film designed to demonstrate the necessity of defending the GDR.⁹⁸ The quality of film production suffered in general in these years. Wischniewski describes the annual film production of 1967 as characterised by affirmation, information and attempts at entertainment.⁹⁹ It was examples of the anti-fascist genre that again bucked this trend. In 1968 Konrad Wolf's autobiographical *Ich war neunzehn* and Egon Günther's *Abschied* appeared.¹⁰⁰ Both were visually and thematically adventurous. Generally, however, the Eleventh Plenum had instilled a climate of self-censorship within the studio and ushered in another lacklustre period of film production.

The films that I shall analyse in the following chapters were made during a period in which, as I have depicted, the political, social and economic landscape of the GDR underwent considerable changes. Furthermore, they

⁹⁷ See Richter, 'Zwischen', p. 196.

⁹⁸ *Geschichten jener Nacht*: 1. *Phönix*, director Karlheinz Carpentier; 2. *Die Prüfung*, director Ulrich Thein; 3. *Materna*, director Frank Vogel; 4. *Der grosse und der kleine Willi*, director Gerhard Klein, 1967. See Wischniewski, 'Träumer', p. 219.

⁹⁹ Wischniewski, 'Träumer', p. 216.

¹⁰⁰ Egon Günther's film was, however, rapidly withdrawn from circulation.

were conceived and produced in an unstable cultural-political environment in which varying types and levels of constraint were placed upon film-making, and in which conflicting notions existed about the function of GDR cinema and the role of the film-maker. The creators of these films were politically committed to the system, but their relationship to the state was not unproblematic. None of the directors of the films that I shall analyse in the following chapters was willing to accept the role of uncritical handmaiden of the state. However, they were susceptible to suggestions that overly critical works might endanger the future of the state, which they were trying to improve, and to fears that their works might not get past the censors. A metaphor chosen by Kurt Maetzig to call for greater artistic freedom vividly reveals the dubious character of power relations between the state and the cultural intelligentsia and its restraining effects. He acknowledges the state's interest in protecting what has already been achieved, but he underlines the perpetual danger of current structures becoming ossified, and stresses the importance of the critical function of art in stimulating change, urging:

Er [Der Künstler] muß mit der Nase voraus im Leben sein wie ein Spürhund. Er muß schnuppern, was kommt. Und die Herrschenden, die über die Staatsmacht gebieten, müßten dankbar dafür sein, solchen schnuppernden Spürhund vor sich an der Leine zu haben. Und sie müßten die Leine sehr lang lassen, sehr, sehr lang, damit er wirklich das Heraufkommende schnuppert.¹⁰¹

Earlier in the same piece, written in defence of his 1957 work *Vergeßt mir meine Traudel nicht*, Maetzig complains: 'Mein Verhältnis zum realen Sozialismus bestand immer in Zustimmung und Kritik. Aber unsere Kulturpolitik hat von mir nur die zustimmende Haltung verlangt und die

¹⁰¹ Maetzig, *Filmarbeit*, p. 106.

kritische zurückgewiesen.’¹⁰² Each of the four films that I focus upon attempt to find a different balance between affirmation and critique. The imagined communities represented reflect changes in the self-understanding of the GDR, and constitute an attempt to open a dialogue about the character of society. They were produced in a period in which film-makers generally believed that they shared a unity of purpose with the SED regime even if they disagreed over the best means for pursuing these goals.

In this background survey, I have made little mention of issues directly concerning gender or sexuality. This reflects the lack of discussion about these issues in cultural-political debate of the day and contemporary film reception. Cultural politicians on the whole tended to restrict themselves to the occasional disapproving comment about what they deemed to be overly sexually explicit sequences in particular films – ones which were usually coming under attack, too, on other accounts.¹⁰³ In this respect my analyses, while grounded in cultural-political context, are largely against the grain, and will demonstrate the role of gender discourse in serving to hold criticism and affirmation in an often all too precarious balance.

¹⁰² Maetzig, *Filmarbeit*, p. 101.

¹⁰³ For example, as Heimann notes, during the backlash against *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* party hardliners attacked the film saying some of its shots were pornographic. See Heimann, p. 309. Similar attacks were made on Kurt Maetzig’s 1957 *Vergeßt mir meine Traudel nicht* and his 1965 film *Das Kaninchen bin ich*.

Chapter Two: *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser*

Introduction

Director Gerhard Klein and scriptwriter Wolfgang Kohlhaase began production of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* in 1956, the high point of liberalisation in the DEFA film studios in the years following the death of Stalin. Set in the divided city of Berlin at a time of growing Cold War tension, the film focuses on the problem of disaffected GDR youth. The production history of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* reflects the unusual situation in the film studio at that time. Despite the rejection of the script by *Hauptverwaltung Film (HV-Film)*, a supervisory agency set up in 1954, Klein had started shooting without a permit. In response to the body's continuing objections limited changes were made, but the film was nevertheless completed and released.¹⁰⁴ In part, the unconventional production history of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* can be attributed to structural problems within *HV-Film* that had weakened its influence over developments in the studio. Political, personnel and economic factors also played their part in affording film-makers a greater degree of artistic autonomy during this brief period. As we have seen, the film's popularity on release in August 1957 did not exempt it from scathing criticism at the film conference in July 1958.

The makers of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* aimed to breathe new life into GDR film. They were clearly concerned with creating a truly popular kind of film that was close to their viewers' lives. Hardly any data was available to

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed account of the film's production history, see Thomas Heimann, *DEFA, Künstler und SED-Kulturpolitik: Zum Verhältnis von Kulturpolitik und Filmproduktion in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1959: Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft* 46 (Berlin: Vistas, 1994), pp. 290-294.

GDR film-makers about their audiences, and Klein reportedly used to drive past queues of cinema goers waiting to see his films to find out what sort of people they were.¹⁰⁵ Both scriptwriter and film director were also open to contemporary international aesthetic trends. It was widely acknowledged in press reports at the time, and has also subsequently been observed by scholars, that *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* was in dialogue with US and West German youth rebel films.¹⁰⁶ The film also evokes US *film noir*, the American gangster movie and early German cinema. One sequence is reminiscent of a German film from the 1920s, G. W. Pabst's 1928/29 production *Die Büchse der Pandora*, while the manner in which East Berlin is depicted has been compared with *Straßenfilme* from the Weimar period.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the majority of contemporary critics commenting upon the film's aesthetics remarked upon its debt to Italian neo-realism.¹⁰⁸

The film-makers' methods reveal, in part, a preoccupation with authenticity typical of neo-realism. In preparation for the film, Klein carried out extensive interviews with young people, later using some of them as lay actors, and elements of the script were based upon information gleaned from the files of Berlin's *Kriminalpolizei*.¹⁰⁹ In an interview in 1993, Kohlhaase

¹⁰⁵ Cited by Fred Gehler, 'Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser', *Film und Fernsehen*, 4 (1986), p. 22.

¹⁰⁶ On the links between Klein's film and Western youth rebel films, see, for example, Horst Knietzsch, 'Wo wir nicht sind ... Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser – ein DEFA-Film von internationalem Format', *Neues Deutschland*, 3 September 1957; Horst Claus, 'Rebels with a Cause: The Development of the Berlin-Filme by Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase', in *DEFA: East German Cinema 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford (New York and Oxford, Berghahn, 1999), pp. 93-116; Irina Jüngling, 'Halbstarke vom Wedding und von der Schönhauser', in *Zwischen Bluejeans und Blauhemden: Jugendfilm in Ost und West*, ed. by Ingelore König, Dieter Wiedemann and Lothar Wolf (Berlin, Henschel, 1995), pp. 69-75; Ralf Schenk, 'Jugendfilm in der DDR', in *ibid.*, pp. 21-31 (p. 23).

¹⁰⁷ Heimann, p. 84.

¹⁰⁸ As Seán Allan notes neo-realism challenged the paradigms of cinematic realism in the GDR. See Allan, 'DEFA: An Historical Overview', in Allan and Sandford, pp. 1-21 (pp. 9-10).

¹⁰⁹ See Peter Hagen, 'Halbstarkentum – Modethematik oder kritische Auseinandersetzung: Ein Gespräch mit Wolfgang Kohlhaas [sic]', *Forum* (Berlin), 2 July 1957, and Heimann, p. 287-288.

described the enormous impact of neo-realism upon him at the time, commenting:

Es waren einige Filme von De Sica, also *Die Fahrraddiebe*, später *Das Wunder von Mailand* und schließlich *Umberto D.* Es kam Rossellini dazu, die frühen Filme, die Episodenfilme aus der Kriegszeit, *Rom – offene Stadt*. Diese Filme haben einen enormen Eindruck auf mich gemacht, ließen mich zum ersten Mal die eigene Umwelt für kinofähig halten.¹¹⁰

In keeping with neo-realist techniques, the majority of the sequences in *East Berlin* were shot on location using restrained lighting techniques. Newspaper reviewers and readers praised the accurate depiction of the Berlin milieu, the verisimilitude of the characters and even the ordinariness of the story. The film's debt to this Italian film tradition has also widely been noted in film scholarship. However, I would argue that the authentic quality of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* has been overemphasized.

The film's framework narrative, the criminal – adventure plot line, and a number of lighting and sound effects cannot be characterised as being typically neo-realist. One contemporary reviewer struggles to assert the quotidian nature of the film, but his difficulty in making such an assertion, about a film that ends with the death of one of the characters and another's arrest for manslaughter, becomes palpable as he begins to qualify his initial statement:

Das Geschehen des Films ist nichts Besonderes. Ähnlich passiert es sicher jeden Tag, vielleicht nicht in der Schönhauser Allee, vielleicht nicht so tragisch. Es ereignet sich, ohne daß viel Aufhebens davon gemacht würde, ohne daß mehr als die nächsten Nachbarn davon erfahren und darüber reden, bis bald auch für sie das Thema geringfügig ist.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Christa Maerker, 'Wolfgang Kohlhaase', *epd-film*, 10/4 (1993), 13-15 (p. 14).

¹¹¹ 'Berlin Ecke Schönhauser: Ein DEFA-Film von hohem Rang', *Berliner Zeitung*, 3 September 1957. Unnamed author.

At times music, exaggerated lighting, a different tonality, and a more obviously composed *mise-en-scène* are used to underline the drama of events. The film-makers do not appear to be concerned with suppressing the film's 'constructed' quality.

By contrast, the Italian neo-realists' aesthetic commitment to the representation of human reality involved, in general, the downplaying of the distance between cinematic construct and reality, even if they, too, on occasion, strayed away from this in their practice. In her account of the movement, Pam Cook writes:

The preferred narrative mode was realist in the sense that fictional events were portrayed as if they were real and without the sort of dramatisation which would draw attention to their fictional character. Except in the immediately post-war period, when ordinary life was experienced in quite dramatic terms, the ordinariness and lack of drama of neo-realist films of this type gave them on the whole little appeal at the box office.¹¹²

Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser incorporates some elements of neo-realism, breaking with the narrative schematicism of Socialist Realism, which bore little relation to life as it was lived in the GDR. However, at the same time, the film, as I shall discuss in more depth in this chapter, employs non-realist elements as part of a bid to entertain as well as to enlighten, and to convey a clear sense of narrative progress.

Most contemporary reception centred on the thematics rather than the aesthetics of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, indicating the sensitivity of the film's topic of youth discontent. The mid-fifties were an era of growing concern about young people's attitudes in both East and West Germany, and a time of mounting Cold War tensions. In 1956 there were youth riots in both East and West Germany, which were regarded as a direct challenge to the establishment.

¹¹² Pam Cook, ed., *The Cinema Book* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), p. 37.

The Politburo's concern about the youth question was reflected in such directives as 'Der Jugend unser Herz und unsere Hilfe: Über die Verantwortung und die Aufgaben der Partei bei der sozialistischen Erziehung der gesamten Jugend der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik' issued on January 24, 1956, and in the opening address to the FDJ on the occasion of the organisation's 10th anniversary.¹¹³ Members of the Politburo realised that large sections of the younger generation who had grown up in the GDR had not been integrated into state youth organisations, and only felt a limited attachment to the state. *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* was, on the whole, positively received in the press for its attempts to investigate the causes of its young protagonists' disaffection rather than simply condemn the individuals themselves.¹¹⁴ By contrast, as Mary Fulbrook observes in her study *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989*, discontent in the GDR was more generally 'both externalized and reified in official views, which almost automatically attributed very diverse expressions of protest to the "class enemy" (usually expressed as an individual, with references to the *Klassenfeind*, the *Tätigkeit des Klassegegners*), allegedly steered from the imperialist-capitalist West'.¹¹⁵

The concern in East and West Germany about the disaffection among young people was partly sparked by doubts about whether the authorities

¹¹³ Heimann, p. 289.

¹¹⁴ Most reviewers seem to applaud the film's understanding of the younger generation and blame the 'Halbstarkenproblem' on the post-war circumstances of missing fathers or the privations – past and present – of war-traumatised mothers. Nurture rather than punishment is the panacea proposed by many. For example, one journalist, in an article entitled 'Ein Jugendproblem, das alle angeht', in the *Sozialistische Demokratie* [Berlin] of 13 September 1957, asks: 'Sind wirklich Prügel das einzige Mittel? Brauchen sie nicht vielmehr unsere Hilfe [...] Denn in allen von den Jungen und Mädchen steckt ein guter Kern, aus dem – bei entsprechender Pflege – eine nützliche Pflanze wachsen kann. Man darf sie nur nicht sich selbst überlassen.' By contrast, in *Neues Deutschland* of 3 September 1957, the talk is of decay rather than growth. The journalist describes youngsters with transistors and James Dean haircuts, dismissing some as annoying but harmless, but warning that '[b]ei den anderen sitzt der Wurm schon tiefer'. See Knietsch, 'Wo wir nicht sind'. For a further account of different positions adopted to the film, see Heimann, pp. 292-293.

¹¹⁵ Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. 151.

would be able to mobilise young men to fight, should it prove necessary. In 1955 Federal Republic had been accepted into NATO, a move which had prompted the formation of the Warsaw Pact. In the year when filming started on *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* compulsory conscription had been introduced for the West German armed forces, the *Bundeswehr*, and in a counter-move the *Nationale Volksarmee* had been set up in the East. Both countries had encountered some resistance to their plans from segments of the younger generation. In the GDR, the anti-fascist, humanistic rhetoric of the post-war years had doubtlessly fostered pacifist tendencies amongst the young.¹¹⁶ Many also had a real fear that war could return.¹¹⁷ The GDR regime was also engaged in an ideological tightrope walk, condemning conscription to the *Bundeswehr* as a militaristic act, at the same time as seeking to justify the NVA as a peacekeeping measure. While trying to make political capital out of the fact that the draft had not been introduced in the GDR, the state was exerting pressure on young men to join the army. An earlier version of Kohlhaase's film script dealt directly with this issue.¹¹⁸ In the film version the controversial passage was excised.

Frequently, US or West German culture was identified as the source of this challenge to the authority of the older generation and state order and security. The youth rebellion films, American westerns or gangster movies, as well as jazz music and dances like the boogie came under fire. Although only six US movies were shown in the GDR in the 1950s, young people regularly visited cinemas in West Berlin. Furthermore, GDR newspapers frequently

¹¹⁶ Heimann observes that the strength of pacifist feeling in the GDR is unknown, but notes that from 1955 more intensive youth work was required to pave the way for the setting up of the NVA because of the existence of pacifist tendencies. See Heimann, p. 289.

¹¹⁷ See Fulbrook, *Anatomy*, p. 135.

¹¹⁸ Claus notes the same point in his article. See Claus, p. 109.

reviewed US films showing in the Western half of the city. The growing popularity of US-influenced dance styles, music and films in the East also undermined aspects of the GDR's national discourse, which sought to portray the FRG as overrun by US culture and the GDR as the representative of authentic German national identity. In her essay 'Rebels with a cause? American popular culture, the 1956 youth riots and new conceptions of masculinity in East and West Germany', Uta Poiger argues that the debates in this era about US culture and male juvenile delinquency were 'debates about the role of the state and ideal citizens, and gender norms were at the core of these discussions'.¹¹⁹ She identifies the mid-fifties as an era in which both states were preoccupied with the reconstruction of German masculinity as a result of the sense of emasculation felt in the wake of Germany's wartime defeat, the establishment of armies in East and West, and moral panics about the influence of US culture. In the GDR this crisis of masculinity was quite possibly intensified by the new emancipated role envisaged for women in state socialism. American cultural influences, Poiger notes, were perceived as a threat to the project to assign to men both the role of provider and the role of strong, but not overly militaristic soldier, and commentators often paradoxically attributed both effeminising and brutalising influences to US films and fashion.

Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser engages with the controversial issue of US youth culture, even appearing to make a plea for a less heavy-handed approach to Western-influenced teenage culture in the East. In lines frequently cited in scholarship as evidence of the film's reforming impulse, the hero Dieter asks

¹¹⁹ Uta Poiger, 'Rebels with a cause? American popular culture, the 1956 youth riots and new conceptions of masculinity in East and West Germany', in *The American Impact on Postwar Germany*, ed. by Reiner Pommerin (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn, 1995), pp. 93-124 (p. 94).

his brother: 'Warum habt ihr lauter fertige Vorschriften? Wenn ich an der Ecke stehe, bin ich halbstark, wenn ich Boogie tanze, bin ich amerikanisch, wenn ich das Hemd über der Hose trage, ist es politisch falsch.' As Nicola Morris notes, the East Berlin depicted in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is also the most American and 'least Berlin' of Klein and Kohlhaase's Berlin films.¹²⁰ As I note above, the film aesthetic itself is in dialogue with Western film trends. Structurally, the film, as Horst Claus observes, resembles Nicholas Ray's 1955 US youth rebellion film, *Rebel Without a Cause*, and its framing structure is reminiscent of American *film noir*, as I shall explore in section three.¹²¹ Film critics and scholars have, as a result, tended to welcome the film's innovative aesthetic, influenced by international cinematic trends, as a fresh breeze in the rather stuffy atmosphere of film production in the 1950s. Yet little or no attention has been given to the film's strange double relation to Western culture, or how this is interwoven with the film's gender discourse.

In an interview given in 1957, Kohlhaase revealed his ambivalence towards Western film culture. He observes that some youth rebellion films are sincere in their concern for the problem, but he accuses the industry as a whole of inciting teenage violence, stating:

Während doch das Medium Film mit seiner ganzen massenpsychologischen Wirksamkeit immer und immer wieder in Aktion gehalten wird, speziell die Jugend zu moralischer und ethischer Hemmungslosigkeit zu erziehen, während man also durch gewissenlose Kriminalstories und Comics effektiv das Halbstarkenheer stets schürt und anhäuft, sind es zugleich Leute gewesen, die dieses gleiche Medium Film zu Appell gegen eine gesellschaftliche Erscheinung benutzten, die ihr eigenes Kunstmittel eben erst heraufbeschwören half und immer noch hilft. Da beißt sich die Katze in den Schwanz – und mögen die

¹²⁰ Nicola Morris, 'The Representation of Berlin in the "Berlin Film" of Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase' (unpublished MA thesis in Film and Television Studies, University of Warwick, 1997), p. 59.

¹²¹ Claus, p. 105.

besten Filme zum Halbstarkenproblem noch so ehrlich gemeint sein, sie bleiben Kritik ohne Tiefenwirkung, solange die gesellschaftlichen Wurzeln dieser Erscheinung in der Tiefe wuchern können.¹²²

Later in the same article, the ostensible links between West German military policy and the brutality allegedly being stirred up the Western film industry, which are hinted at here by the use of the term ‘Halbstarken¹²³heer’, are made more explicit. Intradiegetically, *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* also presents other forms of Western culture in a negative light. For example, Karl-Heinz’s passion for Western fashion leads to his descent into crime, and Kohle’s love of Western cinema leads ultimately to his demise. Western styles of music or dancing are also frequently negatively coded by association. The sequence in which Kohle breaks a streetlight for a dare follows on from a scene in which we have seen the group of young men, who egg Kohle on, dancing the jive on the street with each other. The Prater Garten dance hall, in which jazz and rock n’ roll are played, is the setting for Karl-Heinz’s theft of an ID card. Thus in various ways within the film story, Western culture is linked with deviance from gender norms.

Drawing upon some of the points raised in Poiger’s study of this period, I shall explore in depth how the representation of gender and sexuality interconnects with the critique and affirmation of the GDR state and society. Up to now, there has been an astonishing lack of comment upon the film’s gender coding. Although the film’s propagandistic or partisan elements have been widely acknowledged, much stress has been placed upon the plea in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* for tolerance and for a more humane society. Critics have neglected to examine the gender politics informing the

¹²² Peter Hagen, ‘Halbstarkentum - Modethematik oder kritische Auseinandersetzung? Ein Gespräch mit Wolfgang Kohlhaas [sic]’, *Forum* [Berlin], 2 July 1957.

representations of the de-formed and re-formed society.¹²³ There has, as I have mentioned, also been little detailed examination of the film's ambiguous relationship to Western cinema or culture. The central question I shall address is whether this film, perceived by some factions of the party as dangerously radical and hailed by GDR film scholars for its humanity, may now in retrospect appear, at least in its gender rhetoric, all too loyal to necessities of state. Despite the SED rhetoric that represented women as workers first and mothers second, I shall argue that the film subordinates women's emancipation to an overarching agenda of stabilising masculinity as the necessary basis of national identity.

Gender realignments and the re-formation of the state are inextricably linked in the film. The plot encodes a set of traditional masculine virtues and ends with the formation of a conventionally gendered nuclear family unit, which is integrated into a social order under the aegis of a male authority figure. In the first section of film analysis I shall explore how the young men's problems are linked to the imbalance of gender relations in the home and the effeminising and brutal influence of Western culture. I shall examine how the film seeks to correct Dieter's excessive self-sufficiency and position him as worker, potential soldier and law abiding citizen, and position Angela primarily as daughter, expectant mother and future wife. In section two, my attention will be focused upon how *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* distinguishes East from West Berlin. I will argue that the West is constructed both as a space of male deviancy – sexual and criminal - and harsh authoritarianism. The East, in contrast, is transformed into a space linked with reordered, harmonious family

¹²³ For instance. see Schenk, 'Jugendfilm', pp. 23-24, and Wolfgang Gersch, 'Film in der DDR: Die verlorene Alternative', in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, ed. by Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1993), pp. 323-364 (pp. 333-334).

relations, co-operative male-male relations, and benevolent male authority. The selection of the home and the established neighbourhood of Prenzlauer Berg as the chief locations in the East are not simply indexical bearers of a sense of the authentic, but symbolise belonging and tradition. The Western half of the city is linked, by contrast, with monopoly capitalism, internationalism and Nazism. In section three, I will briefly examine how the flashback narrative is used as a device to contain the disorder and to give the impression that the older police inspector and the young adult male have mastered the problems of the past together. In addition, I shall examine how the framework narrative and the interplay between different cinematic codes also reinforce the sense of a triumph over disturbed masculinity and underpin the sense of a national new beginning.

Constructing Male Models

Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser focuses upon the disaffection of four East Berlin teenagers: Angela, Dieter, Karl-Heinz and Kohle. Set in the politically divided, but physically still open, city of Berlin, and made during a time of increasing Cold War tension, it comes as no surprise that the film identifies the West as one of the causes of the young people's difficulties. Western culture, as I mention above, is shown to have a particularly pernicious effect on two of the male characters. More unusual for this era is the extent to which the film also locates the origins of the teenagers' problems within GDR society. The state's repressive attitude towards teenage culture and the heavy-handed approach of youth organisations are given a share of the blame for creating disaffection.

However, the prime cause of the teenagers' difficulties is traced to domestic politics of the most literal kind.

The homes of all four teenagers share one feature – the absence of appropriate father figures. Dieter is an orphan, Angela is being brought up by her widowed mother, and Kohle's stepfather is a drunkard and a layabout. In contrast to the others, Karl-Heinz has a father but he is unable to assert his authority against his son. Furthermore, in two of the families, the mother is depicted as putting her own sexual needs before the interests of her children. Joshua Feinstein notes that the 'emplotment suggests that their rebellious attitude is a result of domestic anarchy,' but he does not draw attention to the fact that the film links this anarchy to the deviation from traditional gender roles in the family.¹²⁴ Moreover, the film depicts these 'disordered' family relations as having particularly devastating effects upon male children, leaving them vulnerable to the temptations of Western culture. As one contemporary reviewer concluded: 'Letzlich ist es das "Haus ohne Hüter", das die Jungen an den Rand der Verzweiflung treibt.'¹²⁵ I do not wish to deny the truth of the wartime legacy of fatherless children and broken families, or the destabilising influence of this sociological phenomenon. However, the manner in which this problem is represented suggests that the prerequisite for social unity is a family in which a father is present to ensure discipline and order while a mother lives primarily for her children.

The revision of both masculine and feminine values is key to the film's resolution of social conflict. By contrasting and comparing the three young male characters, Kohle, Dieter and Karl-Heinz, the film seeks to re-establish

¹²⁴ See Joshua Feinstein, 'The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema: 1956-66' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1995), p. 72.

¹²⁵ Wolfgang Joho, 'Nachkriegsjugend vor der Kamera. Zu dem DEFA-Film *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*', *Sonntag*, 8 September 1957.

traditional masculine values for the younger generation. The narrative signals disapproval through the catastrophes of death and imprisonment which overcome Kohle and Karl-Heinz. Such outcomes warn of the danger of failing to achieve appropriate manhood. Feminine values are also modified in the course of the action through the readjustment of the relationship between Angela and her mother. The local police inspector is key to the final integration of both Dieter and Angela into a new order where they are respectively allocated the primary roles of protector and worker, and of mother. The benevolent police officer fills the vacuum of authority created by the absent or flawed fathers, representing an ideal of paternalistic state power. Consequently, the film depicts authority as properly being a male preserve.

Of the three male characters, the childish Kohle suffers most from his home situation. The unemployed teenager is subject to regular beatings from his stepfather while his mother and sister are out at work. The catalyst for these violent outbursts is the division of domestic labour between the two jobless men. The older man is unwilling to take on any responsibility for the domestic chores, seeking instead to protect his masculine identity and assert his authority by forcing Kohle to fulfil these duties. He metes out one beating because the teenager fails to peel the potatoes and a second after he neglects the washing up. Kohle is unable to protect himself from these assaults. By contrast, both his mother and his sister are strong and self-assertive. Returning from work one day, his mother – a formidable figure – rescues Kohle from a beating, and threatens to divorce her partner, challenging *his* right to discipline *her* son. However she fails to throw out the violent, unemployed alcoholic. The only reason indicated for her continued tolerance of him is sexual, for in response to her threats, he taunts: ‘Aber einmal am Tag hast du mich noch ganz gern,

was?'.¹²⁶ The film implicitly criticises Kohle's mother's neglect of her maternal function by showing the dire consequences for her son of her putting her carnal desires first. Both Kohle's inability to protect himself and his stepfather's violence are also implicitly linked to the inversion of traditional gender roles.

The home environment of Karl-Heinz, a school dropout who has been living off a parental allowance, is characterised by over-protectiveness. His parents' financial over-indulgence and their indecision about whether to leave the GDR have prevented him from growing up and making a future for himself. The bourgeois Karl-Heinz is the only character to come from an intact family unit, but relations are, nonetheless, depicted as being unhealthy. In contrast to the eternal victim Kohle who is unable to fight back, Karl-Heinz revolts against his family. His aggressive tendencies are linked with his disturbed relationship to his parents. His killing of a Western businessman of a similar age and appearance as his father has Oedipal undertones. The juxtaposition of this sequence with one in which Karl-Heinz pulls a gun on his parents, and then forces his father to grant him power of attorney for their West German bank account, resonates with phallic symbolism. Karl-Heinz's father, a tax advisor who works from home, is impotent in the face of this challenge to paternal authority. Karl-Heinz's character seems determined by the same vulgar Freudian thinking about the construction of masculinity as Kohle's – a carry over, perhaps, in part from popular US narratives of this time, such as *Rebel Without a Cause*.¹²⁷ Both men suffer as a result of 'unnatural' relationships to their mothers and the lack of effective father figures. Thus the

¹²⁶ All quotes from the film are my own transcriptions unless stated otherwise.

¹²⁷ *Rebel Without a Cause*, director Nicholas Ray, USA, 1955.

film's construction of masculinities betrays the influence of the Oedipal paradigm of male identity acquisition.

The film hero Dieter differs from the other two young male characters in that he lost both parents in the war. Growing up as an orphan appears to have promoted in Dieter an excessive self-sufficiency, even rebelliousness. The teenager lives with his older brother, a member of the East German police, the *Volkspolizei*, but is resentful of his brother's attempts to lay down the law to him at home and in public, and he seeks out the company of his friends from the neighbourhood. At the local police station he also shows no respect for the inspector, imitating the cocky poses of the rebellious screen hero and Angela's film idol, Marlon Brando. In the film script, the acting instruction 'Dieter zieht ein Gesicht wie er es im Kino bei Marlon Brando gesehen hat' makes explicit the negative social influence being attributed to US youth film here.¹²⁸

Furthermore, the young building worker resists any kind of involvement in political organisations. At work he rejects the FDJ's attempts to enlist him in their ranks. Nevertheless, Dieter is the only one of the three characters who is able to find a place in GDR society at the end of the film, although, as I shall examine below, this first necessitates a readjustment in his relation to male authority and the male collective. As was not unusual for young male protagonists in nineteenth century novel narratives, Dieter lacks a biological father or father figure at home, and so can accept the inspector as an older figure of authority and in doing so prove his own social maturity.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ 'Wo wir nicht sind: Ein DEFA-Film vom 10.9.56', Script: Wolfgang Kohlhaas [sic]. Storyboard: Gerhard Klein, Direction: Gerhard Klein, Camera: Wolf Göthe, Scenery (Bauten) Oskar Pietzsch, Music Günther Klück, Aufnahmeleitung: Heinz Walter, Head of production Erich Albrecht, VEB DEFA Studio für Spiel-Filme, Potsdam-Babelsberg. Unpublished film script held at the library of the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen, Potsdam-Babelsberg, p. 24.

¹²⁹ More usually, though, in nineteenth century narratives, the orphan has a choice of a number of possible father figures and is socially initiated after making a series of selections and

Another point of contrast between the two deviant male characters, Kohle and Karl-Heinz, and Dieter is their differing relationship to Western culture. The first two frequently visit West Berlin, and are associated with cultural phenomena frequently classed as feminine in pre-war German culture, namely fashion and cinema-going.¹³⁰ Karl-Heinz's penchant for the latest Western trends leads him to break his parents' rules and the laws of the GDR state. He siphons off money from his mother and father's secret bank account in West Berlin and becomes embroiled in smuggling GDR currency and stealing ID cards. His involvement in criminal activities culminates in his committing manslaughter. An obsession for Western movies, by contrast, leads to Kohle's downfall, for they appear to have unsettled his ability to distinguish fantasy from reality and eroded his sense of belonging. His inability to find a job and a girl and to settle down in the GDR are linked to his overdeveloped imagination. Despite having absolutely no qualifications, he nurtures the boyish dream of becoming a pilot, and, though far from heart-throb material, Kohle tries to fix up a date to go to – of course – the movies with the desirable Angela. Her incredulous response reveals how unrealistic his expectations are. Earlier, his desire to win the price of a cinema ticket leads him to break a streetlight, an incident that ultimately results in his fleeing the GDR. Later in the resettlement camp, he copies a trick that he saw in a Western movie. Kohle drinks a mixture of tobacco and cold coffee in an attempt to feign a fever and dies from accidental poisoning.

rejections. See Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, 5th edn (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard, 1992), pp. 63-64.

¹³⁰ This is a frequent association in Weimar culture. For example, in his 1927 essay 'Die kleinen Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino' Siegfried Kracauer rather derogatively identifies popular cinemagoing as a feminine pursuit. See *Ornament der Masse: Essays* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), pp. 297ff.

There is a psychological aspect to the young men's passion for these Western pursuits, which are represented as both a cause and effect of their deviation from standard masculine positions. On the one hand, Kohle and Karl-Heinz's attraction to these Western interests and pursuits is implicitly linked to the effeminising influences of their disturbed family relationships. On the other, Western cultural phenomena are themselves shown to have an emasculating and corrupting influence. Kohle's powerlessness in the real world is linked to his upbringing in a home in which his mother attempts to wear the trousers and in which he is bullied by his stepfather. The young man is unable to defend himself against his stepfather's assaults, but idolises the boxer hero of *Bad Blonde*.¹³¹ His flight into the imaginary world of cinema seems to be motivated by this powerlessness. Yet although the cinema offers a dream of omnipotence, paradoxically, it places the viewer in a passive role, thus exacerbating the problem. Karl-Heinz's fashion consumerism is associated with a disturbed sense of the self and other. In a scene juxtaposed with the sequence in which the tall, well-built Dieter proves his mettle at the building site, the dandyish, gangling Karl-Heinz is shown in his parents' flat admiring himself in his new leather jacket, paid for with stolen money. By contrast, he has no eyes for girls. His interest in clothes is intended to be read as a sign of the warped development of his personality.

Different ways of looking are clearly associated with the young men's different leisure pursuits and with different types of male subject position. The way that the three young men are represented clearly establishes a link between male power and male scopophilic habits. Kohle is nicknamed after his big brown, sparkling eyes, an attribute more usually associated with feminine beauty.

¹³¹ *Bad Blonde*, director Reginald le Borge, GB, 1953.

Described as 'phantasievoll' in the film script of 10 September 1956, his eyes often have a faraway look as he daydreams or relives episodes from the films that he has seen.¹³² By contrast, Karl-Heinz's eyes, as he gazes at himself wearing his new jacket, reflect self-love. At other times Kohle and Karl-Heinz are shown glancing nervously back and forward with expressions of fear on their faces. By contrast, when the camera is turned on Dieter, he generally tends to retain a fixed gaze, revealing self-possession and mastery of the spectacle. Only when challenged by the policeman at the beginning of the film does his physiognomy become more expressive and challenging, and he only shows fear in the West. Angela is frequently positioned, using shot-reverse shot camerawork, as the object of Dieter's gaze, firmly establishing his heterosexual manhood. The absorbed manner in which Karl-Heinz gazes at his reflection at his parents' home contrasts sharply with Dieter's cursory glance at himself in the mirror at the Prater Garten before he rejoins Angela on the dance floor. The orphan Dieter exhibits at times an excessive masculine aggression but none of the more disturbing effeminacy of the other two.

Unlike the other two young men, Dieter seems relatively unmoved by Western teenage culture. His hesitantly expressed interest in motorbikes and football involve the traditionally male preoccupation with mobility, mechanics and competitive sports. With his well-built physique and well-chiselled features, he cuts an attractive figure next to the gangling, foppish Karl-Heinz and the small, chubby Kohle. Furthermore, unlike the two other teenagers, Dieter has no interest in leaving the country as he tells Karl-Heinz at an early stage in the film, citing his brother and his job as his reasons for staying. Later when he is in the refugee camp in the West his attachment to the East is

¹³² 'Wo wir nicht sind', unpublished film script, p. 12.

associated primarily with his attachment to his girlfriend Angela. Karl-Heinz, by contrast, is desperate to leave the country and is trying to secure himself a job in the West via his criminal accomplices, and Kohle also shows little loyalty to the state, strongly resisting Dieter's suggestion in the refugee camp that they return to the East. Dieter's desire to return to the East is not ideological, but is associated with his well-founded masculinity as evinced in solidarity with his brother and a properly heterosexual attachment to his girlfriend. Thus the gender sub-text bears much of the motivating power and substitutes an appealing image of manhood for an ideological message of loyalty to the state.

The series of comparisons between the three young men underlines the degree to which Dieter serves as the vehicle to convey a positive masculine image in contrast to the other two. Along with different attitudes to the West, different leisure pursuits, and different family relationships, a further key difference between the men is that, unlike the school dropout Karl-Heinz and unemployed school leaver Kohle, Dieter is gainfully employed. Well-adjusted masculinity in *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser* is associated with production rather than consumption, and the workplace is represented as central to defining proper adult male-to-male relations. Dieter is willing to work hard, the FDJ secretary praises him for being a 'Prima Kumpel'. His spontaneous sense of camaraderie even leads him to risk his life for one of his workmates when there is a bomb scare on the building site. Furthermore, as a building worker, Dieter plays a very explicit role in helping to construct the new society as part of a male collective. By contrast, the film barely concerns itself with female employment. There are only two brief references to Angela's work, and the employment of Kohle's mother and Angela's mother is actually linked with

problems in the home. While work is vital in defining male identity, female employment is cast in a rather more ambivalent light within the film narrative.

Despite his productivity and courage, Dieter is not simply a positive hero. Along with the technique of contrasting figures – he is built up through contrast with the other two – the film builds dramatic tension by depicting Dieter as a character who initially suffers from internal conflicts and undergoes a positive development. His pacifist leanings, his individualism and his distrust of state authority are all obstacles to his becoming a model citizen. Each is partially, or fully resolved in the course of the narrative. The young man's pacifism is linked to the fate of his parents in the war, and is not depicted unsympathetically. As the FDJ tries to persuade him of the desirability of joining their ranks by stressing the growing threat of war from the West, he brusquely turns them down, but emphasises with feeling: 'Ich bin doch auch gegen Krieg. Mein Vater und meine Mutter sind in dem letzten Krieg kaputtgegangen.' However, his pacifist sentiments are expressed in a much more toned down fashion in this final release than in an earlier version of the script in which the FDJ attempts to recruit Dieter to the NVA and Dieter turns them down saying: 'Na schön, aber ich denke, der Eintritt in die Volksarmee ist freiwillig [...] Für mich wäre das nichts. Ich möchte nicht mal bei der Post arbeiten. Ich kann nämlich Uniformen nicht ausstehen.'¹³³ Given the sensitivity of this issue at the time, the removal of this passage, directly alluding to the issue of rearmament in the East and the pressure being placed upon young men to join up, is not surprising. A similar statement was cut from Wolfgang Staudte's *Rotation*, which was produced in 1949, a time in which there was a

¹³³ 'Wo wir nicht sind', film script, pp. 43-44.

drive to build up the *Volkspolizei*.¹³⁴ The cutting of the passage may even reflect a concession on the part of the film-makers to growing Cold War tensions. Certainly, I would argue that the film narrative develops in a way that suggests that men must be prepared to fight, if necessary, to defend themselves and their country.

The West German government is, as I shall examine in the next section, shown as pursuing militaristic goals that could threaten the existence of the GDR, and in the gender discourse of the film there is an attempt to functionalise young men dually for action in peacetime and in wartime. The male roles of worker and soldier are interlinked in the narrative. Kohle's inability to defend himself clearly makes him an unsuitable candidate for the army, but it also makes him a victim in everyday life. What is depicted as Kohle's excessive pacifism is linked to his unemployment, for he admits to the police inspector that he could get employment in the slaughterhouse, but indicates that he does not have the stomach for it. The other boys cry mockingly: 'Er kann keine Tiere umbringen.' Dieter, by contrast, risks his life for a workmate at the building site, marking out his potential as a soldier. The way that the bomb scare at Dieter's workplace is staged, with howling sirens and rapidly-cut action shots, evokes a wartime situation. In turn, it also encodes the building site in the mode of SED *Aufbau* rhetoric as a *Kampfplatz* where the battle for the peace was to be won by collective male endeavour. Later, in the Western refugee camp Dieter also comes to realise the need for force to counter aggression.

¹³⁴ In *Rotation* the controversial sequence showed the father burning his son's uniform with the words 'Das war die letzte Uniform, die Du je getragen hast'. See Christiane Mückenberger 'Zeit der Hoffnungen 1946 bis 1949' in *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA-Spielfilme 1946-1992*, ed. Ralf Schenk (Berlin: Henschel, 1994), pp. 9-50 (p. 22).

Dieter's individualism is another problem that is surmounted during the film. His emphasis upon self-sufficiency and his continued resistance to participation in political organisations is revealed in his second encounter with the FDJ. Dieter rejects the FDJ leader's offer of help with words that echo those of Wilhelm Tell: 'Mir braucht keiner zu helfen und ich helfe auch keinem. Und jeder macht seine Erfahrungen am besten allein.' In Schiller's eponymous play the Swiss national hero resists his countrymen's attempts to involve him in their organised struggle against the land's oppressors with the statement: 'Der Starke ist am mächtigsten allein.' In Dieter's case his ostensible unwillingness to accept or give help has, however, already been contradicted by his actions during the bomb scare at work, indicating his potential for eventual integration. Dieter's experiences in the West, as I will examine in depth in section two, also serve to indicate to him *ex negativo* the advantages of collective solidarity, and to highlight the essential benevolence of GDR state authority, as well as illustrating the dangers of overly emotional dependent male personal friendships.

Before the ill-fated trip to the West Dieter shows little respect for the law. During his first police questioning Dieter is provocative and rude. In the second, he reacts contemptuously to the inspector's decision not to detain him or charge him in connection with the ID card theft, accusing the police officer of acting in an avuncular manner in order to trap him. Furthermore, Dieter takes the law into his own hands when he attempts to force Karl-Heinz to hand over the money that he owes to Kohle. This is an encounter with fateful consequences, for it ultimately leads to Dieter and Kohle fleeing the GDR. Upon his return to East Berlin it is obvious that Dieter has learned his lesson. In the sequence at the police station, which frames the film, he has now clearly

aligned himself with the *VoPo* and defers to his authority. Dieter's acquisition of a correct masculine subject position is thus also dependent upon his submission to the law, and he subsequently gets the girl. Dieter's behaviour towards Angela, however, does not require adjustment. Although he acts the hard man at times in male company, he shows the sensitive side of his nature to her from the outset. He does not need to be 'tamed' or domesticated by the woman, as is common in the Western, for example.

The successful resolution of the teenager's problems in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is not merely dependent upon Dieter's conforming to the existing system. The representatives of the system also admit their own deficits and indicate a willingness to change. Both Dieter's brother, linked through his job to state power, and the works' FDJ secretary admit having made mistakes. The FDJ secretary comments: 'Im Betrieb haben wir uns schon Vorwürfe gemacht, daß wir uns nicht genügend mit ihm auseinandergesetzt haben.' Dieter's brother adds: 'Zusammensitzen wäre vielleicht umso besser. Wir haben Jahre lang hier in einer Bude gelebt. Ich habe nicht begriffen, daß man nur mit einem reden kann, wenn man ihm überhaupt zuhören will.' Instead of trying to impose their authority on Dieter, they come to realise that they should have treated him as an equal, as a brother. The implicit message is that in the future these young men will recognise each other as social partners. Even the friendly police inspector, who is the chief representative of state power, admits his share of guilt in the voice-over in the final sequence of the film. Such admissions of culpability by representatives of a state that had a tendency to depict itself as infallible are signs of the film's reformist impulse.

The figure of the inspector also represents a covert plea for a more humane exercise of state power. Rather than being punitive in his approach, he

repeatedly tries to find out the causes of the young people's problems and to help them. Contemporary responses to this new type of authority were mixed. The figure was praised by a number of critics. A reviewer in the *Neue Zeit* (Berlin) pays tribute to actor Raimund Schelcher's portrayal of the inspector, commenting 'sein VP-Kommissar ist [...] wenig schneidig, sondern sehr ruhig-väterlich'.¹³⁵ Two other critics stress the humanity of the character. A journalist in *Tribüne* refers to him as a 'lebenskluger, menschlicher Volkspolizeikommissar'.¹³⁶ By contrast, in public discussions about the film the police themselves seem to have been keen to reassert their right to discipline and punish. For example, Sigrid Smolka records that: 'Der Berliner Volkspräsident ließ auf einem Jugendforum darüber keinen Zweifel aufkommen, daß die Macht des Staates alle jene zu spüren bekommen, die unbelehrbar sind.'¹³⁷ Her interviews with various Berlin police officers also revealed a scepticism in the ranks about the softly-softly approach portrayed on the silver screen.

Some members of the public, too, were rather equivocal in their feelings. One reader, a Klaus Hofstädter from Berlin – Baumschulenweg, at first applauds the representation of the *Volkspolizei*, commenting: 'Das ist wirklich eine neue Polizei, die hier in Erscheinung tritt, eine Polizei, die ein Freund der Helfer ist.'¹³⁸ However his initial enthusiasm quickly wanes, giving way to criticism of the policeman's laxness. He adds:

Aber wird sie [die Polizei] nicht etwas zu lasch und onkelhaft geschildert? Wie der VP-Kommissar da mit den Jungen im

¹³⁵ 'Die sich auf der Straße treffen ... Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser: Ein DEFA-Film von jungen Menschen', *Neue Zeit* (Berlin), 3 September 1957. Unnamed author.

¹³⁶ Dieter Borkowski, 'Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser Allee', *Tribüne* (Berlin B), 31 August 1957.

¹³⁷ Sigrid Smolka, 'Ran ans heiße Eisen: In den Fußtapfen [sic] eines Films – Halbwüchsig und halbstark?', *Wochenpost*, 7 December 1957.

¹³⁸ 'Nicht die übliche Tonart ... Leser schreiben zu Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser', *Junge Welt*, 12 September 1957.

Revier spricht und zusieht, wie sie die Hände in den Hosentaschen behalten, sich herumflegeln und dumme Antworten geben – ich glaube, ein guter Oberleutnant wird etwas mehr für Ordnung sehen.

As well as this appeal for a more authoritarian approach from the police, Hofstädter goes on to complain about the lack of guidance provided by Dieter's work colleagues. The prominence of the inspector figure and the absence of positive worker figures was also criticised by Anton Ackermann, the head of the film department in the culture ministry, as *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* came under increasing fire in 1958. Ackermann observed: 'Das einzig Positive, wozu man sich hier aufschwingt, sind Volkspolizisten. Einen positiven Arbeiter der Klasse als erzieherischer Faktor [...], das kennt man nicht.'¹³⁹ The choice of a policeman to represent the GDR state perhaps created discomfort because it unwittingly indicated that the state's cohesion derived more from force than ideological conviction.

From today's perspective, the police inspector figure also seems rather double-edged. The character can be understood as embodying an implicit appeal for a gentler type of authority. At the same time, the contrast between the benevolence of the inspector and the harsh authoritarianism in the West serves to legitimise GDR state power. The inspector's gentle questioning of Angela is juxtaposed with Dieter's remorseless interrogation by the camp authorities in the West. Yet by constructing the relationship between citizens and state as a paternalistic one, the film does not challenge the hierarchical structures of power in the GDR. In addition, the figure also reinforces the association of power with older men. Furthermore, the inspector's arbitration in both 'private' and 'public' conflicts awakens the rather uncomfortable

¹³⁹ Cited by Heimann, p. 309.

impression that the state has the right to intervene in all spheres. Paradoxically, in a film whose narrative, as I have shown, seeks to establish a more clearly delineated gender division of labour among men and women, the lone male authority figure, as in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, assumes both traditional male and female roles.

The inspector, as a reader of *Die Frau von Heute* of 15 November 1957 observed, acts not merely as a substitute for the missing or deficient fathers, but also as a model for neglectful mothers. She recommends:

Besonders alleinstehende Mütter sollen diesen Film nicht versäumen. Neben der klaren Zeichnung unserer Jugend verdeutlicht er uns Müttern viele Probleme, mit denen wir fertig werden müssen. Auch als Folge des Hitlerkrieges gibt es zum Beispiel noch so manche "Mutter", der – zum Teil unbewusst – ihr Kind unbequem wurde bzw. ist. Es ist natürlich, wenn sich Frauen nach einem guten Kameraden sehnen, nur muß eine Mutter ihren Kindern stets Vorbild sein; wir müssen sie durch unseren Einfluß zu den Menschen machen, die eine Wiederholung des vor 1945 in Deutschland Geschehenen unmöglich machen. Das erreichen wir nicht durch Strenge, Strafen und Verbote, die verlocken unsere wissensdurstige Jugend erst recht zum Ausprobieren und zu dummen Streichen. Unsere Kinder wollen Erklärungen haben, wollen ernst genommen sein. Der VP-Kommissar gibt uns dafür einige Hinweise.¹⁴⁰

In this reader's letter, as in the film itself, the sexual needs of women left partnerless by the war are depicted as competing against what should be their primary duty, their child-rearing responsibilities. In *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser* the inspector intervenes to help Angela when her mother refuses. He first learns of Angela's situation when he is investigating Dieter's disappearance, and unlike her mother, the police inspector does not condemn the young woman upon hearing that she is pregnant by Dieter. He sets in motion the chain

¹⁴⁰ M. Lier, 'Soviel echtes Leben', *Die Frau von Heute*, 15 November 1957. Reader's letter.

of events that leads Angela's mother to break off her relationship with her married lover. The inspector is thus instrumental in reuniting the two women.

Although *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* chiefly focuses upon masculinity and the young men's adventures drive the narrative, there is also an attempt to articulate revised feminine values. Unlike the young male characters Angela does not break the law, but her pregnancy does challenge social mores. Although not treated over-judgementally by the film, her pregnancy is represented as socially problematic because of Dieter's absence, her age, and her mother's reaction. Just like the young men's crimes, Angela's difficulties are traced back to her disturbed home circumstances. Her mother is concerned primarily with her own sexual and emotional needs, forcing her daughter to stay out on the streets until midnight on the nights when she is entertaining her married lover at home. Angela's mother's neglect of her mothering function is also underlined in the episode in which she purchases ham for her lover's supper, but expects her daughter to go without. Her own failure to set any kind of example undermines any moral authority. Angela refuses to listen to her mother's dictates about what she should wear and how she should behave. After hearing that her daughter is pregnant, Angela's mother criticises her for being a 'Straßenmädchen', yet, in a literal sense, that is exactly what she has forced her to become. This concern with female sexuality in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is relatively unusual in DEFA film history. Unlike the *femme fatale* figures typical of this period in US cinema and which are also not unknown in West German cinema, female characters in DEFA film of the 1950s tend to be rather desexualised and depicted as a positive social force.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ For example, the West German youth rebellion film, *Die Halbstarken*, features the sexy, but treacherous female character Sissy, while there are numerous *femmes fatales* in US *film noir*. In GDR films from the early 1950s, there are one or two minor female figures who play a

Within *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* there is a shift away from a socially dangerous, sexualised femininity, conveyed through Angela's and Kohle's mother, towards a nurturing femininity, conveyed through the daughter who in the course of the film is increasingly linked with motherhood and domesticity. This development is signalled by the reconciliation between mother and daughter, as well as Angela's adoption of a more modest style of dressing. Her initial sex-kittenish look is toned down considerably. After becoming pregnant, she swaps her modish and figure accentuating get-up of pumps, capri pants, tight roll-neck sweater, push-up bra and parka for a rather more traditionally feminine look: a modest, matronly dress with a Peter Pan collar. Relations between Angela and her mother are also only restored subsequent to the mother's rejection of her married lover, who is also her boss at her workplace, and her implicit recognition of her first and foremost duty to her child. Although the film does not overtly condemn sex outside marriage, the film's ending marks the implicit formalisation of the relationship between Angela and Dieter. Their reconciliation resurrects the nuclear family as a social unit and Angela's future is mapped out in terms of her role as mother-to-be.

Consequently, relations between the young man and woman are coded in patriarchal terms. From the outset Dieter has taken a clear lead in his relationship with Angela. It is he, for instance, who proposes a toast when they are in the dance hall, who guides her away from the crowd of dancing couples, and then leads her back to the dance floor from outside. The different ways in which they dance together at the Prater Garten are also significant, as dance styles, too, can convey certain gender roles. As Poiger notes, the GDR was

femme fatale role, such as the dark-haired, bourgeois widow in Martin Hellberg's 1953 production, *Das kleine und das große Glück*, who seduces the main character Schwalk, and almost prevents his redemption by the blonde, chaste Erika. However, such characters are the exception rather than the rule.

hostile to the new African-American influenced music styles and dance styles, which seemed to pose challenges to gender roles with their lack of restraint and their 'equality', and in reaction promoted ballroom dance classes where 'the restrained man led his partner'.¹⁴² In the introduction, I note how Western dance styles are negatively coded by association within the narrative, citing the sequence that precedes the smashing of the street lamp. This scene is also particularly striking because everyone dancing is male, further linking the dance to unnatural gender relations. In the later Prater sequence Dieter and Angela do jive together, but later separate themselves from the other jiving couples and Dieter begins to guide his partner around the dance floor with emphatic control and restraint. Elsewhere, too, in the narrative, Angela appears to be allocated a subordinate role in the social contract. Her role is focused primarily in the private sphere.

Essential for the conflict resolution in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is the establishment of normative male behaviour among the younger male generation. The contrasts between the three male characters in terms of their attitude to work, to Western culture and to interpersonal relationships, as well as their different plot trajectories, are the chief means used to encode these norms, and point the way to a more harmonious future order. Significantly, Dieter - who has no parents - is the only young male character who is able to attain what is by implication a correct masculine subject position at the end of the film.¹⁴³ His courage, capacity for hard work, spontaneous comradeship and

¹⁴² Poiger, p. 105.

¹⁴³ A certain discomfort resonated in contemporary reception about the film's failure to rehabilitate all of the characters. For example, in '*Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser: Zur Uraufführung des DEFA-Films von Wolfgang Kohlhaas [sic] und Gerhard Klein*', *BZ am Abend*, 2 September 1957, the journalist notes that the film has an optimistic ending because it reveals that 'all diese jungen Menschen durchaus keine schlechten Menschen sind, daß aus ihnen prächtige Kerle werden können [...]'. Later, however, paradoxically, he refers to 'die

loving nature mark out his potential as a male subject, but he has to learn to accept the authority of the police inspector, an *ersatz* father figure whose office marks him out as a representative of the social order rather than as an individual. Dieter's acknowledgement of the inspector's authority heralds the beginning of a sanctioned relationship with Angela, the future mother of his child. Although the film focuses on the male characters, the women, especially Angela, are essential in getting the plot to work out. The ending leads the way back to a more binarized model of gender relations.¹⁴⁴ *Berlin - Ecke*

Schönhauser exercises some criticism of the state and of GDR society, but in the narrative the problems are depicted as deriving from a divergence from traditional gender roles: to bad mothering and the absence of suitable father figures. Having explored the implied models of masculinity and femininity conveyed through the main characters, I shall now turn in the next section to look at how the film contrasts East and West through the interplay of location and action. In particular I shall show the extent to which gender discourse, rather than overt political rhetoric, is pivotal in differentiating between the two Germanys.

East or West: A Straight Choice?

The divided city of Berlin provided film-makers with an ideal cinematic opportunity to compare the systems of East and West. Klein and Kohlhaase had already set two of their earlier films, *Alarm im Zirkus* and *Eine Berliner*

haltlos-labile, leichte Beeinflussbarkeit' of the 'am tiefsten in den mörderischen Sumpf geratenden Karl-Heinz' and notes Kohle's fate with the rather ambivalent comment: 'Bürstenkopf Kohle, der vom Stiefvater brutal geschlagen, [ist] im Grunde so kameradschaftlich und [muß] doch tragisch enden.'

¹⁴⁴ Frank Krutnik identifies this twofold structure in his description of standard Oedipal dramas. See Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 86.

Romanze there, and the action in *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser* criss-crosses the border. In *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser* different gender identities, patterns of social relations and historical narratives are mapped onto the different halves of the city through the interplay of action and location.

West Berlin is represented as an *unheimlich*, threatening, overwhelmingly male-populated space. After crossing the border, both Dieter and Karl-Heinz lose control, though in different ways. In a wild outburst of violence Karl-Heinz ends up killing a man, who has been lured to a hotel by his criminal accomplices. Dieter succumbs to paralysing fear in the face of the dog-eat-dog masculinity of the resettlement camp and develops what is portrayed as an unhealthy intimacy with Kohle, who subsequently dies in his bunk bed. Karl-Heinz's act of manslaughter in a hotel room, and his earlier criminal transactions, carried out against the backdrop of famous West Berlin landmarks, link the Western half of the city and by extension capitalism with urban pathology.¹⁴⁵ In the refugee camp the aggression of the other camp residents and the authoritarianism of its management are related to West German militarism, and this, in turn, with a repressed Nazi past. The key locations are places of temporary residence, and are associated with male deviancy and with death. The rest of the action takes place on the street, in railway stations or in cars. Consequently, the West is linked with a sense of homelessness.

By contrast, in the East there is, as Feinstein notes, a preponderance of domestically coded space.¹⁴⁶ However, the home is, at first, portrayed as a place of conflict and alienation rather than of intimacy and support.

¹⁴⁵ Feinstein, p. 87.

¹⁴⁶ Feinstein, p. 87.

Dysfunctional family life forces the four young people to take to the streets, and for all of the young men these roads eventually lead West. Dieter's transgression of the state border and his experiences of the West's brutalising and effeminising aspects alter his attitude to the social order in the GDR. Meanwhile, during the men's absence, the reconciliation effected between Angela and her mother serves to redeem the family and the home. Feinstein argues that *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* seeks to overturn the equation linking the West with freedom and the East with confinement, stating:

If space in the West seems open but is actually imprisoning – Dieter has to break out of the resettlement camp – the opposite is true in the East. The urban landscape may seem restrictive but it is actually rich in possibility. The *Ecke* – corner of the city – to which the film continually returns may seem ordinary, but it is special in its own quiet way. The final shot shows Dieter in the courtyard of Angela's building. Such a setting has rich resonances in German film and popular culture, both as a focus of lower class life and as a metaphor for the city's confining nature. The *mise-en-scène* of the film plays upon the latter register of associations. The courtyard is barren and empty. Nevertheless, Dieter's return fills it with a web of social relations.¹⁴⁷

It is not just Dieter's return that is significant. Feinstein fails to take into account the rehabilitation of the German home that takes place in his absence. For Dieter, the journey back East signals a return to what has become a *Vaterland*, embodied in the benevolent police inspector, and a proper *Heimat*, symbolised by his young pregnant girlfriend. The reformed Eastern home is linked with love and with new life. The use of the neighbourhood of Prenzlauer Berg as the backdrop for the sequences in East Berlin evokes a sense of familiarity and belonging and establishes a link between the proletarian past and the new Germany of the GDR.

¹⁴⁷ Feinstein, p. 88.

The diverging trajectories of the male and female characters reinforce traditional associations of women with domestic space and men with both public and private space. Far more screen time is devoted to the representation of Angela's home circumstances than to those of the three male characters. Confinement and exclusion are experienced by all four young people, but for Angela, in contrast to the young men, this tension is played out solely in relation to her own home, and stems from her mother's capricious attempts to control her daughter's sexuality while satisfying her own. The strained relationship between mother and daughter is conveyed spatially through the positioning of the two figures. Despite their physical proximity their eyes seldom meet, and they are often represented with their backs turned to one another, or looking into mirrors. A sense of claustrophobia rather than intimacy is evoked by the shot range, which varies between medium close-up and *plan américain*. The way the flat is filmed also emphasises the tension between inside and outside. A number of shots position mother or daughter by the window. In the introductory shot of the first sequence in Angela's flat Dieter walks through the tenement courtyard towards the camera, and the shot pans upwards following his gaze to a window in the fourth or fifth floor where the curtains are being closed by Angela's mother, symbolically shutting him out. In the second sequence in the flat, Angela steps over to the window as she is being berated by her mother about her plans to go out, and the scene cuts to a shot of Dieter in the courtyard, then back to Angela at the window. This tension is only resolved at the end of the film. The final sequence shows Dieter outside and Angela opening the window and shouting to him that she's on her way down.

For Angela, the departure from and the return to her mother's flat signals the transformation of home relations and is the key to her reintegration. For the male characters the transgression of the state border is pivotal to their eventual fate. The border to the West itself seems to mark a gender threshold. The only women who feature in the West Berlin sequences are three rather marginal figures, who are portrayed as desexualised and/or emasculating. They are the two women at the church-run railway mission who hand Dieter and Kohle over to the authorities, and the sour-faced secretary at the camp, referred to in the script only as an 'älteres Fräulein', who brusquely demands of the young men that they hand over all their identity papers.¹⁴⁸ Not only are there very few women depicted in the Western sequences, the men that the teenagers encounter are brutal, cynical or severely authoritarian.

For Karl-Heinz, the West seems to trigger his suppressed patricidal urges, and he kills a man in a hotel suite that looks, on the surface, like a normal residence. In fact, it has been rented by Karl-Heinz's criminal associates for the purpose of robbing the man. The Western 'home' is thereby linked with deception, betrayal and death. The act of manslaughter committed by the teenager is depicted as an irrational outburst and evokes a sequence from Pabst's *Die Büchse der Pandora*. Under the pretext of carrying out a business transaction, Karl-Heinz's criminal associates invite a currency dealer to the rooms. Karl-Heinz, hidden behind a curtain in a back bedroom, is supposed to jump out upon a given signal and stun the man. But he misses the cue after catching sight of himself in a mirror and becoming strangely mesmerised by his reflection. The victim, who has become suspicious about the men's intentions, draws back the curtain and Karl-Heinz strikes out wildly.

¹⁴⁸ 'Wo wir nicht sind ...', unpublished film script, p. 135.

The strange sequence of looks, reflected in the three-part mirror, and the editing and framing of the sequence are reminiscent of the staging of the murder of Dr Schön in Pabst's film, which Thomas Elsaesser interprets as the son's own wish-fulfilment fantasy.¹⁴⁹ Earlier, Karl-Heinz's fearful, half-articulated inquiries about the possible consequences, if he were to do more than just stun the man, foreshadow the imminent act of violence, and also make it appear as an act of wish fulfilment. Similarly, its juxtaposition with the sequence in which Karl-Heinz pulls a gun on his father also gives the killing the quality of an Oedipal fantasy, suggesting that the intended object of his aggression is in fact his father, or any kind of male authority.

Whereas Karl-Heinz suffers an aggressive outburst in the West, for Dieter, the crossing of the border is associated with the sapping of his strength. Usually bold and decisive, Dieter appears becalmed and at something of a loss after arrival. He appears wrong-footed and out of his depth in his dealings with the icy camp authorities. His emasculation is subsequently suggested by his confinement indoors. Up to this point Dieter has hardly been associated with domestic space at all. As the hard-boiled refugees prowl in packs in the fenced grounds of the camp, Dieter and Kohle are restricted to the dormitory. Although Dieter ventures outside into the garden, he retreats when his courage fails. In particular, he is afraid of a cudgel-wielding youth who threatens to smear his backside with shoe polish. Dieter caves in to the bullies and later admits his fear to Kohle. The diminution of his masculine powers is linked not only to the encounter with a new harsher type of authority and to the masculine aggression in the camp, but also with his friendship to Kohle.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Elsaesser. 'Lulu and the Meter Man', *Screen*, 24, no. 4/5 (1983), 4-36 (p. 31).

In the refugee camp the relationship between Dieter and Kohle begins to take on homoerotic undertones. In the dormitory sequence, after Dieter's encounter with the bullies, the two men's physical proximity, the lighting and the tone of their conversation gives an impression of greater intimacy between the two men. Dieter's new vulnerability is also suggested by his near supine posture; he is now shown lying on his bunk as Kohle sits on the bed next to him. Even Dieter's voice becomes softer. Indirectly, it is his close friendship with Kohle that has led him to flee to the West in the first place, and to leave his girl and his country behind. In the railway mission Kohle presses Dieter to stay with him, saying: 'Wir müssen immer zusammenbleiben. Ja?', subsequently reminding him: 'Wir wollten doch zusammenbleiben.' Whereas, at first, Dieter had insisted that he wanted to return, later Dieter loses his resolve after being threatened by the other camp inhabitants. Rather than hatching out a plan to escape, now it is he who repeats: 'Wir müssen zusammenbleiben, Kohle. Ja?', indicating something of a reversal of power relations between the two men. This is clearly not the kind of male solidarity that the film wishes to encourage. Kohle's death is linked with his desire not to be separated from Dieter, for he drinks – what turns out to be – the poisonous potion, to avoid being flown out of West Berlin without his friend. Moreover, Dieter's powers are only restored after his friend's death, further suggesting that we are intended to regard their relationship as deviant. In a protracted fight scene – the prelude to his escape from the camp and his return to the East – we watch him reassert his physical strength, beating up the camp bully and finally – in perhaps another instance of Freudian symbolism – wrenching away from the youth the large stick previously used to cow him into submission.

Rather than being a staging post on the way to freedom, the resettlement centre is a holding camp in which East German teenagers, all wearing the latest Western teenage fashions, await their call-up for the West German army. Housed in a villa in the West Berlin suburbs, the centre resembles an army barracks on the inside. Its brutish gang culture seems completely at odds with any kind of army style discipline and improbable in the light of the management's severe, authoritarian treatment of Dieter, but reflects contemporary arguments in the East, which I allude to in the introduction to this chapter, linking Western pop culture and West German military policy. On 19 September 1956 the secretariat of the FDJ Central Council made a statement alleging 'West German authorities first used American culture to corrupt youths into "lasciviousness" and "inhumanity" and then responded by disciplining these adolescents in the military'.¹⁵⁰ And a similar accusation is articulated *ex negativo* in an interview with the film's scriptwriter in 1957, which I mention in the chapter introduction.¹⁵¹ The camp sequences would seem to imply: firstly, that Western pop culture was a tool intended to provoke teenage delinquency; secondly, that its spread to the East was part of a Western strategy to undermine the East; and thirdly, that the Federal Republic was cultivating delinquency as part of its conscription policy.¹⁵²

The location itself and Dieter's treatment in the camp also imply a link between contemporary West German policies and the National Socialist past.

¹⁵⁰ Poiger, pp. 107-108.

¹⁵¹ The article states: 'Unser Staat hat nicht das geringste politische Interesse, ein Halbstarkenheer als Reserve für eine politische Armee zu züchten, sondern gerade das politische Interesse, die Jugend zu wertvollen, gebildeten Menschen zu erziehen.' Peter Hagen, 'Halbstarkentum - Modethematik oder kritische Auseinandersetzung? Ein Gespräch mit Wolfgang Kohlhaas [sic]', *Forum* [Berlin], 2 July 1957.

¹⁵² Poiger cites contemporary East German press reports accusing the West of deliberately stirring up violence for military ends. See Poiger, pp. 107-108.

Upon arrival at the camp Dieter is subjected to an interview that is closer to an interrogation, and is effectively incarcerated, for he is denied a pass to leave. The marks on the walls in the office, where pictures once hung, suggest that these men used to serve other masters whose portraits were once displayed there. The camp topos may even be designed to evoke the memory of Nazi concentration camps with Dieter's self-liberation echoing the GDR's founding myth of the self-liberation of the anti-fascist fighters from Buchenwald. Other locations used in the film imply a continuity between the Nazi past and post-war West Germany. For example, a shot of the stump of the Gedächtniskirche, a reminder of the horrors of war, cuts to a scene near the inter-regional railway station at Berlin Zoo, where a newspaper seller is regaling his potential customers with news about the latest rearmament plans and the possibility of the equipping of the *Bundeswehr* with nuclear weapons. The VW used by Karl-Heinz's criminal associates makes a similar connection between past and present, simultaneously bringing modernity, capitalism, and male criminality into association with Nazism.

The backdrops from East Berlin featured in the film lack the specific symbolic associations of some of the West Berlin settings, such as the Ku'damm and the Gedächtniskirche.¹⁵³ The depiction of the East is also quite strikingly different from that of other East German films of the early fifties, such as Kurt Maetzig's 1952 film *Roman einer jungen Ehe*, which, as Feinstein observes, tended to give prominence to new symbolic spaces of the state, such as the Stalinallee, in an attempt to achieve national resonance.¹⁵⁴ In the case of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* it was in fact the depiction of a quite well-known

¹⁵³ Feinstein, p. 87.

¹⁵⁴ Feinstein, p. 65.

everyday milieu that sparked identification and belonging, as readers' responses testify. In the *BZ am Abend* of 25 September 1957 Jutta J. commented, 'interessant, sogar "unsere" Würstchenbude ist dabei', while 60-year-old E. Lenz, of Schönhauser Allee, remarked, 'Nicht nur die Aufnahmen aus unserer Straße sind echt, sondern auch die Schauspieler sind lebenswahr.'¹⁵⁵ As a long-established residential area, Prenzlauer Berg was more closely interwoven with personal narratives and less ideologically coded than a new street like the Stalinallee. As Morris notes, part of the film's appeal to the audiences of the time appears to have lain in what she terms 'self recognition'.¹⁵⁶

The use of the working-class neighbourhood of Prenzlauer Berg to represent East Berlin also establishes a sense of continuity with a past of a different sort, namely that of the pre-war workers' movement. The title sequence of the film consists of a long panning shot of the intersection of the Schönhauser Allee and the Dimitroffstraße, renamed the Danziger Straße after the *Wende*, and all of the subsequent Eastern sequences unfold in and around the neighbourhood's late nineteenth-century tenement buildings. This area in and around the Dimitroffstraße overground station, now known as the Eberswalder Straße stop, was an area in which the director had always wanted to shoot a film – of one kind or another. As Kohlhaase described in an interview:

Als wir über diese Ecke sprachen, sagte Klein: 'Ich wollte schon immer mal was an dieser Ecke drehen!' Es wäre ihm egal gewesen, welche Geschichte. Er hätte da auch einen Dokumentarfilm gedreht, oder, was weiß ich, ein Verkehrsmagazin. So sind wir oft über irgendwelche Höfe gelatscht und durch irgendwelche Torwege und haben gesagt: 'Hier gehen wir noch

¹⁵⁵ 'Eine Straße, wie sie lebt und lebt', *BZ am Abend*, 25 September 1957.

¹⁵⁶ Morris, p. 70.

mal irgendwann hin.' Wir fanden, daß sich eine Geschichte besser ausdenken läßt, wenn man einen bestimmten Vorrat an möglichen Drehorten hat.¹⁵⁷

The film-makers' affection for this part of the city is reflected in these sequences, making them emotionally appealing. In the opening shot we also see an advertising board for the SED newspaper *Neues Deutschland* on the *Hochbahnbrücke* which, Feinstein argues, 'valorized the ordinary and identified the new society with the actual'.¹⁵⁸ I would argue that it is in fact intended to stress the idea of historical continuity in change. The use of this ordinary, working-class setting enables the film-makers to convey a sense of rootedness without evoking a part of German history that was besmirched with associations with National Socialism.

The film presents us with two very different depictions of urbanity in East and West. The rhythm of cutting gives the impression of a two-speed city. The establishing shot of the Schönhauser Allee comprises a very long, slow pan across the street, whereas the establishing shot of West Berlin consists of a very quick take of the Ku'damm and the Gedächtniskirche. Fast-paced city life in downtown West Berlin contrasts with the more leisurely pace of life in the Eastern neighbourhood. The selection and the presentation of topoi in East Berlin downplay its city character, and indeed, as a result, not all viewers perceived the film to be an authentic depiction of their urban reality. One reviewer, for instance, writing for the *Tribüne* [Berlin B], of 31 August 1957, queries why the film-makers show 'eine provinziell vereinsamte Schönhauser

¹⁵⁷ Hannes Schmidt, 'Er sucht die Poesie, die in den Dingen steckt: Gespräch mit dem Autor Wolfgang Kohlhaase', in Hannes Schmidt, *Werkstatterfahrungen mit Gerhard Klein: Gespräche: Theorie und Praxis des Films 2* (Babelsberg: Betriebsakademie der VEB/DEFA Studio für Spielfilme, 1984), pp. 6-44 (p. 24).

¹⁵⁸ Feinstein, p. 78.

Allee' when it is normally full of 'ein wirklich brausender Verkehr'.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, in contrast to the nineteenth-century surroundings of Prenzlauer Berg, West Berlin is denoted as a modern, international city. Many of the more minor spatial motifs associated with West Berlin are typically modernist topoi: glass-fronted shops, a cinema, a railway station with a newspaper hawker, symbolising the circulation of goods, images, traffic and information. Along the Ku'damm are a number of shops with non-German names, and the multilingual border sign marking entry to the Western sector is prominent, clearly marking it as an internationally occupied area.

The spatial construction of the East pivotally depends upon a series of oppositions with the West. Male deviancy in the West is opposed to realigned gender roles in the East, homelessness is set against domesticity, modernity versus tradition, crime against order and death against life. In addition, the film draws upon conventional GDR narratives of historical identity that linked the West with the Nazi past and the East with 'good' German historical traditions. Culturally, the film depicts the West as being a multilingual, foreign-influenced location. The East is not represented as being free from Western cultural influences, which are frequently connoted as negative by association. The plotline suggests an exorcising of these influences. In his study of the construction of place in the film, Feinstein argues that Klein and Kohlhaase's film marks a departure from previous films in its unorthodox construction of GDR reality, commenting: 'The GDR's superiority expresses itself less in utopian potential than in present reality, in its thereness.'¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, Morris notes that the change in film title during production from 'Wo wir nicht

¹⁵⁹ Dieter Borkowski. 'Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser Allee', *Tribüne* (Berlin B), 31 August 1957.

¹⁶⁰ Feinstein, p. 86.

sind', an allusion to the line spoken by the police officer at the end of the film, to *Berlin –Ecke Schönhauser* suggests a shift in emphasis to stress 'the presence of the East' rather than the 'otherness of the West'.¹⁶¹ The film does, indeed, powerfully create a sense of belonging through its evocation of place using a neo-realist aesthetic. However, I would argue that it is important not to underplay the dynamic of the narrative development, which leads to transformations of Eastern space and signals a new 'national' beginning, nor to ignore the extent to which the East's 'ordinariness' gains its appeal thanks to the 'extraordinariness' of the West. Without an element of adventure and transgression, *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* would probably not have enjoyed the same kind of box office lure. In the next section I shall examine how narrative structure and filmic coding play their part in conveying a sense of a re-formed and united society with a healthy future.

A Bright Future in East Berlin

Unlike *Der geteilte Himmel* or *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* is not centrally concerned with legacies of the past or with establishing the state's anti-fascist credentials. It does, as I have shown, touch on these issues via its selection of settings and locations and the family histories of the teenagers. However the film's immediate concern is with addressing political problems of the here and now: resistance among young men to joining the NVA; the influence of Western culture in the East and the lure of West Berlin; generational conflict and young people's strained relationship to authority. In the course of the action the problems identified by

¹⁶¹ Morris. p. 59.

the film are overcome, and the GDR is depicted as a society in which the main protagonists can look forward to a happy future. In this section I shall show how the narrative framework and the hybrid filmic style of *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* contribute to this process of conflict resolution.

Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser is framed by sequences set at the local police station. In the first sequence Dieter – who has just returned from the West – tells the inspector that his friend Kohle is dead, motivating the beginning of the flashback. It constitutes the major part of the film and forms an investigation, of sorts, into the reasons for what has happened. In the last sequence at the station, which precedes the young hero's reconciliation with Angela, the police officer reveals Karl-Heinz's fate. This framing structure is not typical of neo-realist narratives, which tend to be episodic and open-ended in character, and it plays an important role in the film narrative's construction of the new community in three ways. The crime-film style beginning provides a relatively dramatically appealing way of launching an investigation into social problems, while reassuring the viewer that these problems are likely be surmounted in the course of the narrative. Its conclusion provides a means of closing off this troubled past and achieving a sense of forward momentum. Secondly, the narrative framework facilitates the sealing off of the West by showing Dieter's return across the border in the first sequence, and indicating through the coding of the final sequence that aberrant Western influences have been expelled. Thirdly, the film prefigures the readjustment of social relations between the younger and older male generations and reinforces their central role in the social order by implying that the investigation is an act of collaboration between Dieter and the police inspector.

Flashback narratives are, as Thomas Kühnel notes in his analysis of *Der geteilte Himmel*, quite common in DEFA films, and three of the four films to be analysed are told retrospectively. In a state that could be hypersensitive to critique, he argues this form enjoyed popularity because it allowed a conflict to be explored while indicating from the outset that this conflict would be overcome in the course of the narrative.¹⁶² While we expect the cause of Kohle's death, which Dieter announces to the police inspector at the beginning of the film, to be explained to us in the course of the narrative, Kühnel's assertion that retrospective narratives tend to de-dramatise the action does not hold for *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*. Its opening signals that we are likely to have the subversive pleasure of witnessing crimes or transgressions before having the satisfaction and comfort of seeing order restored. Without its crime-investigation style framing structure, reminiscent of the *film noir* *Mildred Pierce*, the film's beginning would be devoid of drama.¹⁶³

Just before the end of the film we see the inspector finishing typing up a report of the events at the police station. The officer tells Dieter that Karl-Heinz has received ten years for manslaughter, adding that Angela is waiting at home for him. As the inspector is speaking, the scene cuts from Dieter at the police station to his girlfriend's apartment building. We see a shot of Angela opening a window and shouting 'ich komme'. There are no longer any barriers to their relationship. The camera pans down to Dieter's uplifted face and then follows him as he turns and walks out through the courtyard. He stops and stands propped up against the door looking out into the busy sunlit street. Notably, the lighting in this final scene contrasts with that in the rest of the

¹⁶² Thomas Kühnel. "Dieser seltsame Stoff Leben": Konrad Wolfs *Der geteilte Himmel* zwischen Experiment und Kritik', *DEFA-Film: Erbe oder Episode: Augenblick 14* (Marburg: Schüren-Presse, 1993), pp. 25-39 (p. 31).

¹⁶³ *Mildred Pierce*, director Michael Curtiz, USA, 1945.

film, which mostly uses an evenly-lit, neo-realist style aesthetic, or occasionally an exaggerated type of lighting more reminiscent of US crime films. This combination of the scenes at the police station and those near Angela's home underlines the sense of harmony in and between public and private sphere.

In *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* the sequences that diverge from the neo-realist aesthetic are, in the main, linked with the character of Karl-Heinz. When Karl-Heinz pulls a gun on his parents in their flat and later threatens to shoot Dieter and Kohle in the attic, there is an exaggerated play of light and dark that resembles the chiaroscuro lighting typical of *film noir*. Furthermore, the shot of Karl-Heinz, in the back of the VW driven by his two criminal associates in the West, is considerably darker in tonal range than both the preceding and following shots. One of these underworld companions is also explicitly described as being Italian in appearance in the film script. *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* here appears to be making a quite self-conscious filmic allusion to mafia-centred movies. In the sequence depicting the killing of the West German businessman it is less the lighting than the *mise-en-scène* and the plotment that conveys a certain Expressionist feel, given its use of mirrors and drapes, the strange looks and unmotivated action. The filmic coding of these sequences underlines Karl-Heinz's deviancy. There is a certain ambiguity in the association that *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* develops between Western cinema and deviance, and its own narrative strategy that uses transgressive characters and allusions to Western film genres to add drama and aesthetic appeal, and to differentiate East from West.

All of the three film styles are associated with social disorientation or disorder.¹⁶⁴ Expressionist film – in terms of its *mise-en-scène*, its use of lighting or its emplotment – often portrays a world where the distinctions between fantasy and reality are blurred. Both film viewers and film characters are frequently denied any all-seeing perspective, and the very possibility of such a perspective is often called into question. Similarly, as J. P. Telotte observes, ‘[*film noir*] because of its disconcerting look and equally disturbing events, plunges viewers into a world that seems anything but conventional. Uncontrolled passions, corruption, murder, plottings of every sort are woven into its fabric, suggesting threatening eruptions in the normal [...].’¹⁶⁵ It is an aesthetic which emphasises subjectivity. The exaggerated play of light and dark and unusual camera angles are used to give external shape to personal insecurities and subjective experiences, to create the effect of a psyche turned inside out.¹⁶⁶ While the roots of German Expressionism are located in the social instability and disorder of the years immediately following World War One, the *film noir* and the gangster film make very overt references to social corruption in the United States. The *film noir* was, as Cook notes, in fact long pilloried in the United States because of its extremely negative *Weltanschauung*.¹⁶⁷ By drawing upon these film genres, *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* conveys an impression of corruption and criminality, and simultaneously implies that this corruption stems from elsewhere.

¹⁶⁴ *Mildred Pierce* starts with Mildred beginning to tell her story in flashback at the police station. The beginning of the youth film *Rebel without a Cause* is also set in a police station, but the film has a linear and not a flashback narrative.

¹⁶⁵ J. P. Telotte, *Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 26.

¹⁶⁶ Telotte, p. 17.

¹⁶⁷ Cook, *Cinema*, p. 93.

The development of the film plot functions to expunge these disturbing irrational elements and underscores their routing in the final sequence. The bright sunlight in the concluding scene is reminiscent of the ending of *Mildred Pierce*, which ends with Mildred and Bert, her first husband, walking out under the archway into the sunshine.¹⁶⁸ There the switch from *chiaroscuro* lighting to bright sunlight signifies a return to normality and a new beginning. Their reunion signifies Mildred's return to a safe, subordinate domestic role. In *Mildred Pierce*, too, the source of the disorder was a transgressive threat to normative masculinity, but posed in that case solely by deviant femininity. Here it is the dark forces linked with Karl-Heinz and his unhealthy manhood, and by extension the West, that have been expelled. By the end, the East is established as a rational, transparent world where a relationship between cause and effect has been established. This mastery of past events and establishment of order is implicitly represented as the outcome of co-operation between the older and younger man.

Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser seems set on emphasising the possibility of achieving a shared vision of reality through this implied narrative collaboration. Although the flashback is first motivated as Dieter's account (at the beginning there is a fade-out from Dieter's face to his standing in Angela's *Hof*, or courtyard) later it is no longer attached to any particular point-of-view. Feinstein describes the detective as 'the film's joint narrator' because the film includes events that Dieter did not know of. The police officer finds out from Dieter how Kohle's death came about, and Dieter learns from the inspector what has become of Karl-Heinz and Angela during his time in the camp.

¹⁶⁸ On the use of symbolic use of film lighting in *Mildred Pierce*, see Pam Cook, 'Duplicity in *Mildred Pierce*', in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1980), pp. 68-82.

Furthermore, Feinstein notes that the policeman's transformation of Dieter's story into a typed police report 'gives it the stamp of objectivity'.¹⁶⁹ This contrasts with many *noir* films, which, as Telotte argues, tend to testify to relativity, to a subjectivity at work and thus remind us that every view comes from a single, invariably limited point of view.¹⁷⁰ Frequently, too, *film noir* narratives centre on, as Cook notes in her account of the genre, a struggle between narrative agents, usually a woman and a man, over the truth.¹⁷¹ It is usually a woman, as in *Mildred Pierce*, who is perpetrating the deception. In Curtiz's film, the main flashback represents the eponymous protagonist's 'account' of the happenings leading up to the death of her second husband, in which she tries to cover up her daughter's guilt. The male detective sees through her story, and, as Pam Cook argues, Mildred submits to the Law. *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* does not play with the viewers' expectations in this manner. Klein and Kohlhaase's film does not have the same tightly focused structure as *film noir*, or the markedly subjective flashbacks. The co-operation between Dieter and the police inspector prefigures their collaborative role in the newly established order.

It is clear that Dieter is to play the junior role in this social partnership. The young hero's more subdued body language and demeanour in the police station scenes indicate from the outset that he has come to accept the Law. The fact that the police inspector has the final say, once more clearly establishes him as the ultimate authority, but also as an authority, as I have shown in section one, that recognises its fallibility, for the officer announces: '[...] Ich bin schuld und du bist schuld. Wo wir nicht sind, sind unsere Feinde. Fang neu

¹⁶⁹ Feinstein, p. 73.

¹⁷⁰ Telotte, p. 16.

¹⁷¹ Cook, *Cinema*, p. 96.

an, Junge!’ The final scene affords Dieter the traditional adult male position of access to both private and public spheres, while associating Angela primarily with the private sphere and her future role as mother. Dieter is no longer out on the street, but is now standing on the threshold between the apartment block and the street, Angela is inside. By contrast with the atomised, dangerous West, traditional social and gender relations are implicitly reasserted in the course of the film in the East by the spatial distribution of the young male and female characters in the final tableau, and by the male social partnership established through the co-operation between Dieter and the inspector.

Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser stands out from other film production of its era both because of its aesthetic innovation and its identification of contradictions and discontents within GDR society. While it issues a basic plea for a more humane and caring social ethos, the film locates the root cause for the majority of problems in the private sphere or in the West. Furthermore, the dual process of promoting identification with the East and rejection of the West is based in a very conventional gender discourse. The new society established in the course of the narrative is hardly radical in its structure. Its basic building block is the re-formed nuclear family unit, and relations between state power and GDR citizen are paternalistic in character. In contrast, in particular with *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Spur der Steine*, there is little sense of a socialist collective or exposition of socialist ideology, although the inspector invokes the collective in his final words. In *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, in contrast to the later films that I shall examine, the formation of a bond between a heterosexual couple is not depicted as standing in tension with the social whole. The film starts with a loose association of young people who meet in the street and ends with the imminent formation of a new intact family unit

which accepts the authority of the *Vaterstaat*, as embodied by the policeman.

In the conclusion the film connects the state and the domestic sphere in a harmonious relationship.

Chapter Three: *Der geteilte Himmel*

Introduction

Konrad Wolf's film *Der geteilte Himmel* appeared in 1964 just a year after Christa Wolf's story of the same title was published in book form. The DEFA director had already started adapting the text soon after its appearance in the student magazine *Forum*.¹⁷² The story takes place in the months leading up to the construction of the Berlin Wall and in the days shortly afterwards. It is based around the story of a young woman who is coming to terms with her decision not to join her lover in the West. A metaphorical link is created between the protagonist's loss and the division of Germany. The work quickly gained considerable resonance both for its frank depiction of problems within the GDR and its complex narrative structure.¹⁷³ In the context of the DEFA director's life and oeuvre it is not difficult to discern why Wolf decided to adapt *Der geteilte Himmel* for film. As Anthony Coulson observes, 'the earnestness of his commitment as a creative artist and state functionary to social debate and progress under Communism, inform Wolf's work from first

¹⁷² See Ulrich Gregor, ed., *Wie sie filmen. Fünfzehn Gespräche mit Regisseuren der Gegenwart* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1966), p. 11.

¹⁷³ As well as representing a tacit response to the building of the Wall, it was also a product of the Bitterfelder Weg, a cultural initiative that had given writers first-hand experience of the workplace and opened their eyes to problems of socialist production. See Peter Hoff, 'Menschen im Sozialismus: Eine Liebesromanze als politisches Gleichnis: *Der geteilte Himmel* (1964)', in *Fischer Filmgeschichte: Zwischen Tradition und Neuorientierung 1961-1976*, ed. by Werner Faulstich and Helmut Korte (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1992), pp. 86-103 (p. 90), and Dieter Schiller, 'Geteilter Himmel: Literarische Reaktionen auf den Mauerbau', in *Brüche, Krisen, Wendepunkte: Neubefragung von DDR-Geschichte*, ed. by Jochen Černý (Leipzig: Urania, 1990), pp. 200-207 (p. 202).

to last'.¹⁷⁴ While *Der geteilte Himmel* was partisan, seeking to convince the audience that the future lay in the GDR, it was also critical.

The roots of the director's commitment to socialism stretched far back into his youth, and like many of his generation his political beliefs were closely connected to his experiences of Nazism. The son of the Communist playwright Friedrich Wolf, he had spent part of his childhood in Soviet exile. He returned to Germany at the age of nineteen as a Red Army officer involved in the final offensive on Berlin. By the time of his sudden death in 1982, he had made thirteen films for DEFA and two TV films. He also had held a number of high-level offices in various cultural and political offices. For seventeen years he was President of the Academy of Arts, a post to which he was elected shortly after the making of *Der geteilte Himmel*, and he became a member of the Central Committee of the ruling Socialist Unity Party a year before his death. His tenure of such posts, as Marc Silberman observes, led to his being regarded with scepticism by some of the younger more outright opponents of the regime.¹⁷⁵ Yet despite his commitment to GDR socialism, Wolf was not interested in simply presenting viewers with idealised images of their society.

The director believed the function of film art was to reveal and make viewers actively engage with the problems and contradictions of their country. In an interview the year after the release of his adaptation of *Der geteilte Himmel* Konrad Wolf attacked previous *Gegenwartsfilme* for depicting GDR society in ways that were clearly at odds with their audiences' own experiences, saying:

¹⁷⁴ Anthony S. Coulson, 'Paths of Discovery: The Films of Konrad Wolf', in *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), pp. 164-182 (p. 164).

¹⁷⁵ Marc Silberman, 'Remembering History: The Filmmaker Konrad Wolf', *New German Critique*, 49 (1990), 163-191 (pp. 165-166).

Wir haben den Leuten sozusagen Wunschkonzeptionen gezeigt, wenn wir einerseits den verständlichen Wünschen des Publikums entgegenkamen und andererseits unsere Wunschgebilde offerierten, die zwar auch sehr verständlich und auch vielleicht sehr lebenswert sind, die aber nichts zu tun haben mit den Realitäten, mit denen es Leute in Wirklichkeit im Leben zu tun haben. Damit konnten wir den Leuten nicht helfen. Im Gegenteil. Wir haben unser Publikum teilweise eingelullt, teilweise verärgert, weil es merkte, die Rechnung stimmt nur äußerlich, geht aber in Wirklichkeit nicht auf.¹⁷⁶

Wolf was of the opinion that film art should not only be intellectually, but also aesthetically challenging. With *Der geteilte Himmel*, he was embarking upon a project that was a response to one of the most controversial decisions of the GDR state: the building of the Berlin Wall. Furthermore, his decision to adapt a novel with such a complex non-chronological narrative structure and constant switching of narrative perspective, reflected, as Coulson notes, a desire to experiment with narrative techniques to 'discover a filmic language that could articulate what he saw as the social and psychological complexities of his theme and the issues it raised for GDR society'.¹⁷⁷

Initially, the director and the other members of the five-strong script-writing team, which included Christa Wolf, considered presenting the story as a linear narrative. Subsequently, however, they decided that it was necessary to retain the retrospective approach and the associative, non-chronological structure, in order to communicate the full meaning and effect of the story that to a high degree are conveyed in and through the structure. Speaking to Cuban students about his aims, Konrad Wolf explained that the narrative technique was intended to draw the spectator into Rita's experiences by having them, like

¹⁷⁶ Konrad Wolf, 'Versuch einer totalen Sicht: Stellungnahme in Sonntag vom 17.1.1965' in *Konrad Wolf: Direkt in Kopf und Herz: Aufzeichnungen, Reden, Interviews*, ed. by Aune Renk (Berlin/East: Henschel, 1989), pp. 97-100 (p. 100).

¹⁷⁷ Coulson p. 173.

her, attempting to make sense of the fragmented memories.¹⁷⁸ The style of the film reveals borrowings from the Eastern bloc film canon, for example in its use of montage, but certain stylistic features, such as the elliptical, associative editing techniques and occasional use of freeze-frame photography, are typical of *nouvelle vague*. In interview, Wolf, who trained at the Moscow film academy, names a number of Soviet and Western influences, including Italian neo-realism. After prompting, he concedes parallels between *Der geteilte Himmel* and the work of *nouvelle vague* director Alain Resnais, including his 1959 film *Hiroshima mon amour*, but also adds:

[I]ch finde Resnais' Methoden zu subjektivistisch im Verhältnis zu dem großen Thema, das er sich gestellt hat. Die subjektivistisch-formale Seite seiner Filme finde ich zwar interessant und attraktiv [...], aber im Verhältnis zum Thema oft geradezu deprimierend, weil ich von Resnais so viel (natürlich in meinem Sinne) erwartet habe.¹⁷⁹

His comments criticising the overly-subjective nature of Resnais' work are interesting in the light of the shift in *Der geteilte Himmel* in the representation of the main protagonist that I shall explore below.

For its time the film can be regarded as aesthetically daring, as both national and international responses indicate. Wolf clearly saw the adaptation as a chance to take GDR film art in a new direction and to link up with international film-making trends. In June 1964 it was the subject of a special conference of the *Deutsche Akademie der Künste*.¹⁸⁰ Shortly after its general release, the head of the artistic work group *Roter Kreis*, Dr Günter Karl,

¹⁷⁸ Konrad Wolf, 'Konrad Wolf beantwortet Fragen kubanischer Studenten zum *Geteilten Himmel*', protocol by Christiane Mückenberger, *film-wissenschaftliche mitteilungen*, 6 (1965), 34-42 (p. 37).

¹⁷⁹ See Gregor, *Wie sie filmen*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁰ For a record of proceedings, see *Probleme des sozialistischen Realismus in der darstellenden Kunst behandelt am Beispiel des DEFA-Films Der geteilte Himmel: Referat und Diskussionsbeiträge der II. Plenartagung der Deutschen Akademie der Künste zu Berlin vom 30. Juni 1964* (Berlin/East: Henschel, 1964).

published an article in its support that seemed designed to deflect criticism from the film by stressing its experimental nature and conceding its flaws. He writes:

Es ist richtig, daß damit versucht wird, Bereiche zu erobern, die bisher im großen und ganzen der literarischen epischen Gattung vorbehalten waren. Prinzipiell muß ein Versuch der Befruchtung einer Kunstart durch eine andere bejaht werden. Die unabdingbare Aufgabe des Künstlers aber ist es, die konzeptionellen oder andere Strukturelemente der einen mit den Bedingungen der Kunstart, auf welche sie fördernd wirken sollen, in den harmonischen Übereinklang zu bringen, der erst ein Kunstwerk ausmacht. Das ist den Schöpfern des *Geteilten Himmels* zweifellos nicht in allem gelungen. Doch sollte ein schöpferisches Experiment, und um ein solches handelt es sich bei diesem Film im besten Sinne des Wortes, nicht an dem nicht voll Gemeisterten, sondern an dem Entwicklungsfähigen gemessen werden.¹⁸¹

The film was subsequently discussed for weeks in regional and national newspapers. While its non-linear associative structure was criticised by some for being too difficult for the average viewer to understand, it also won some praise from those demanding an aesthetic renewal of film art in the GDR.¹⁸² Furthermore, it was the first GDR *Gegenwartsfilm* in years to receive a favourable response outside the country, being screened in film clubs in the Federal Republic and West Berlin, as well as at film festivals in Edinburgh, Cuba, and Karlovy Vary. Unexpectedly, it even became a crowd puller. Within

¹⁸¹ Günter Karl, 'Filmexperimente im Streitgespräch: Eine Betrachtung zum Film *Der geteilte Himmel*', *Neues Deutschland*, 5 September 1964.

¹⁸² In a reader's letter entitled 'Ein filmisches Kreuzworträtsel?' in *Sonntag* (Berlin), 18 October 1964, one H. Geier attacks the film for being completely incomprehensible to the 'normal viewer' and for undermining the social function of film art. The nature of the criticism raises suspicions that it was a letter planted by conservative factions within the party rather than a letter from a member of the public. Responding in the newspaper *Sonntag* of 17 January 1965 to criticisms of this kind, Wolf firstly plays down the film's complexity, saying that he and others had scored an own goal by emphasising in the film's pre-release publicity the intellectual character of the film. He goes on, however, to question the cultural-political commonplace that the *Gegenwartsfilm* should have mass appeal, asking whether, with the advent of television and the increasing differentiation of GDR society, it was still tenable to talk about a single film-going public and thus implicitly whether it was feasible to expect one film to cater for the tastes of the whole population. Konrad Wolf, 'Versuch', pp. 97-99.

two weeks of its release in September 1964 there had been 200,000 viewings, and by the beginning of 1965 it had enjoyed an audience of 1.5 million.¹⁸³

Wolf's experiment, however, can only be judged a partial success. From an aesthetic viewpoint the film's dual narrative structure does not altogether cohere, as even critics – contemporary or otherwise – well disposed towards *Der geteilte Himmel* tended to conclude.¹⁸⁴ A number criticise Rita's passivity in particular.¹⁸⁵ The film is regarded by Coulson as a transitional work – both aesthetically and politically – within Wolf's oeuvre. He sees it as coming mid-point in the development of the director's filmic language from what is in the 1950s, as he puts it 'fundamentally an eloquent rhetoric of persuasion, in the service of a strongly held political and social creed, to the reflections of a voice of exploration which speaks across doctrinal frontiers [...]'.¹⁸⁶ There is a certain polyvalence present in *Der geteilte Himmel* that is not there in Wolf's earlier works. However, Coulson's observation that in *Der geteilte Himmel* Wolf allows the heroine's path of discovery to develop without judgmental interventions or declarations appears to obscure the role of the extradiegetic narrator for one.¹⁸⁷

The use of new filmic techniques derived from *nouvelle vague* represents a move towards a more associative handling of space and time, but I

¹⁸³ These figures are cited in Konrad Wolf, 'Konrad Wolf beantwortet Fragen', p. 40.

¹⁸⁴ For example, film critic Hartmut Albrecht partly criticises the narrative structure, see 'Provokation des Denkens: Nun auf der Leinwand: *Der geteilte Himmel*', *Nationalzeitung* (Berlin), 4 September 1964. On the formalism of *Der geteilte Himmel*, see Silberman, p. 177.

¹⁸⁵ The passivity of Rita is attacked in a reader's letter from Siegwart Schleiffer, Halle, entitled 'Passive Rita', in 'Große Gestalten unserer Zeit: Der Film *Der geteilte Himmel* im Urteil der Zuschauer', *Neues Deutschland* [Berlin], 11 November 1964 and it is acknowledged as a general focus of criticism in the article by Dr Karl, who attributes the defect to the partial failure of transferring the structure of the *Bildungsroman* into film. Film scholars Ludmilla Kasjanowa and Anatoli Karawaschkin are among a number of film scholars who attack Rita's passivity as one of the main defects of the film. See Kasjanowa and Karawaschkin, *Begegnungen mit Regisseuren: Kurt Maetzig, Günter Reisch, Joachim Hasler, Konrad Wolf*, ed. by, trans., rev. and ed. by Dr Christiane Mückenberger (Berlin/East: Henschel, 1974), pp. 155-157.

¹⁸⁶ Coulson, p. 166.

¹⁸⁷ Coulson, p. 173.

disagree with Barton Byg's argument that the film consequently promotes a greater sense of subjectivity or interiority.¹⁸⁸ On the contrary, the film is unable to represent convincingly the narrative past as Rita's memories and the narrative present as her process of reflection, and, in comparison with its literary source, greatly diminishes any sense of her as an interpreting consciousness or as an articulate subject. Moreover, although it raises questions about GDR society, ultimately its message is, as Joshua Feinstein observes, normative.¹⁸⁹ Rather than conveying the idea of a subject engaged in a process of rational choice, the film reduces Rita to the status of a token endorsing socialist society.

Der geteilte Himmel relies upon a strict gender division of labour in its attempt to negotiate the contradictions inherent in its project: to combine critique of socialist society with a constructive vision designed to lend legitimacy to the GDR and its system; to give expression to the collective trauma caused by the building of the Wall while justifying its construction.¹⁹⁰ As a result it creates additional inconsistencies. It is the male characters who articulate competing views of the GDR: of its social system, values, identity and the state's relationship to the Nazi and its own Stalinist past. Some of these views are clearly partisan, others are intended to offer valid criticism, while others are straightforwardly oppositional. In an attempt, nevertheless, to validate the positions represented by the socialist male characters, the filmmaker Wolf reduces the young female protagonist Rita to a signifier of male

¹⁸⁸ See Barton Byg, 'Geschichte, Trauer und weibliche Identität im Film: *Hiroshima mon amour* und *Der geteilte Himmel*', trans. by Thomas Nolden, in *Zwischen gestern und morgen: Schriftstellerinnen der DDR aus amerikanischer Sicht*, ed. by Ute Brandes (Berlin: Lang, 1992), pp. 95-112.

¹⁸⁹ Joshua Feinstein, 'The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema: 1956-66' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1995), p. 179.

¹⁹⁰ In his analysis of *Der geteilte Himmel* Feinstein also discusses the role of Rita in expressing the collective trauma caused by the building of the Wall. See p. 180.

power, a suffering body elliptically expressing the pain of German division, and to an icon of humanity and goodness promising redress of problems in a future socialist society. Wolf's aesthetic greatly diminishes the subjective aspects of the representation of Rita, and in the end the film wobbles between overblown pathos and a sense of suffering victimhood that evokes pity but not identification with the heroine. While appearing to express regret for the lack of individual self-fulfilment, it represents self-sacrifice not merely as a necessary evil, but also paradoxically as a testament to the system's value. As a result, *Der geteilte Himmel* risks leaving the spectator's sympathies with the creative individual Manfred who goes to the West rather than the female martyr who remains in the East.

The relationship between the individual and socialist society is consciously problematized by the film, yet the narrative unconsciously raises additional questions with its gendering of subject positions, creating different male and female relationships to society, place and even history. As I shall argue in the first section, Rita's choice in favour of her country over her lover affirms the socialist collective as a social model that takes precedence over and above the couple or the family. However, her commitment to the new society is expressed in the form of the affective relationships, almost familial in character, that she develops with the men that she meets in the work sphere. The 'nationalisation' of Rita's love is intended to legitimise GDR authority, provide a sense of social cohesion and evoke belonging. In section two, I will look at the film's ambivalent representation of technological progress and modernity in its depiction of both West Berlin and Halle, and the idyllic aspect to the representation of Rita's country home that reinforces the impression of her utopian femininity. Lastly, I shall look at the contrasting gendered

relationships to history of the central characters. While the men struggle to define the GDR's relationship to its Nazi past and define the political character of the new state, Rita is depicted as a historical innocent who represents the ideal of a humanised future. Through her breakdown, suffering and recovery, she gives physical expression to the collective pain caused by the building of the Wall and provides some – if not an altogether convincing – sense of a new beginning.

From Lover to Substitute Father

The tension between critique and affirmation of the GDR, incipient in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, becomes a structuring contradiction in *Der geteilte Himmel*. The break up of the relationship between Rita and Manfred is intended to signal, in part, a deficit in socialist society, and yet the tale of separation serves as the chief means to outline GDR national values and legitimise the system. Division, as the title makes abundantly evident, goes to the very heart of the film. It is down to the female protagonist to offer a vision of a more inclusive society. She cannot, however, bridge the gaps.

The cost for Rita of playing this role is her objectification. Although nominally the central character, Rita is, in dramaturgical terms, a passive hero. As Hoff observes: 'Die "dramatische" Hauptgestalt ist Manfred.'¹⁹¹ Again and again we see her as the third point in a triangle with two opposed male figures, a constellation that will recur in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and *Spur der Steine*. Despite the director's expressed intention to remain true to his literary source, in the film adaptation of Christa Wolf's story the accent is shifted away from

¹⁹¹ Hoff, p. 93.

Rita's development as an individual.¹⁹² Instead, she becomes a token of male power over whom the two opposing camps battle, as well as a symbol for a better future. Her increasing isolation from Manfred, her growing closeness to the socialists and the personal sacrifice that she makes by deciding against joining her lover in the West serves, at least ostensibly, to affirm the authority of the older male figures and the system as a whole. In this section I will show how conflicting aims and aspects of the film are reflected in a division of labour between male and female characters in the narrative. Whereas the men in the film are active protagonists, Rita serves as a passive cipher ultimately signifying which side wins out and offering hope for the future. I shall begin by examining the chief male characters before moving on to look at the female protagonist.

The problem of social alienation in the GDR is thematised through the character of Manfred. His growing disaffection culminates in his leaving the GDR for the West, but *Der geteilte Himmel* does not provide a wholly unsympathetic portrayal of the young scientist.¹⁹³ The film traces the reasons for Manfred's scepticism about the socialist system, for his professional frustration and his social isolation. Here, as in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, a connection is made between the non-integration of young male characters and problematic paternity. Manfred's father is associated with a cluster of attributes typical of negative male figures in a number of DEFA films. He is unfaithful to his wife, dishonest at work and an

¹⁹² At the Academy of Arts debate about the film Wolf emphasised that he had focused upon remaining as faithful to the text as possible. See *Probleme*, p. 55.

¹⁹³ Klaus Finke oversimplifies matters when he argues that Manfred simply represents 'ein Bild des inneren Feindes'. See Finke, 'Entscheidung für die "Heimat des Neuen": Das Beispiel *Der geteilte Himmel*', in *Heimat in DDR-Medien*, ed. by Klaus Finke (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998), pp. 26-37 (p. 30).

ex-Nazi.¹⁹⁴ It is Herr Herrfurth's political opportunism that is the prime motivation for Manfred's rejection of his father, who rapidly replaced his Nazi party badge with an SED one after the war. The young man clearly regards the rest of his father's generation as similarly tainted because of their involvement in Nazism and/or the war. In the early stages of their relationship Manfred asks Rita: 'Warum wollen Sie nicht wahrhaben, daß wir alle ohne Eltern aufgewachsen sind?'¹⁹⁵ Like Karl-Heinz, Manfred's rejection of the authority of the older generation is implicitly linked with his inability to find a place in society.

The young research chemist's hostility towards the GDR system stems not only from his failure to recognise its legitimacy and authority, but also from the restraints that it is placing upon his own professional development. Manfred loves his job, but he is frustrated by the general rate of scientific progress in the GDR. He compares it unfavourably to advances made in the West. Moreover, he faces personal difficulties in getting his scientific innovation accepted. Despite the efficiency savings that the device would bring to industry, he is unable to find a firm that is willing to introduce it into their factories. In the film the reasons for the rejection of the invention, linked in Christa Wolf's novel with Western sabotage within the firm testing the device, are omitted. Instead we are left with the impression that, as in *Spur der Steine*,

¹⁹⁴ Like Herr Erdmann (Karl-Heinz's middle-class father in *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser*), the bourgeois Herr Herrfurth has a job linked with finance. Both men are also involved in illegal financial activities of one kind or another. Herr Erdmann has an illegal bank account in West Berlin, while Manfred's father is party to a financial fraud at work. In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* Peter's adoptive father, Herr Naumann, is thrown out of the communist party for blackmarketeering after the war. Herr Herrfurth, like Herr Naumann, is unfaithful to his wife. Manfred's father's sexual infidelities, like those of Conny, the travelling salesman, in Slatan Dudow's 1952 production *Frauenschicksale*, are linked to his job. Manfred dates the beginnings of his father's infidelities to his promotion to the position of accountant and his becoming the owner of a car. Thus sexual promiscuity, capitalism, mobility and the West are loosely associated.

¹⁹⁵ Unless otherwise stated, quotations from *Der geteilte Himmel* are my own transcriptions.

systemic inflexibility or corruption is blocking progress, for Manfred appears to be constantly thwarted by bureaucratic obstacles. In common with Beyer's film, and with *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, frustrated creative potential is figured as male.

Manfred's creativity is linked to his individualism. Unlike Balla's building work in *Spur der Steine*, his scientific experimentation is represented as an act of individual creation, and a certain ambivalence attaches to this point. Although he has a post at the university, we only see him carrying out his experiments at home, as Rita sits knitting (!). Given the cultural context, the fact that we never see him in an institutionalised setting can be interpreted as further evidence of his estranged relationship to the collective, and in DEFA films of this era male characters who are never depicted in a work setting tend to be marked as negative characters.¹⁹⁶ Yet Manfred's enjoyment of his work is obvious, and he is clearly producing valuable results. Thus, the film implicitly raises the question of the compatibility of the pressures of the collective and individual creativity. As we shall see, too, in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and *Spur der Steine*, male individualism is simultaneously portrayed as a valuable force in society, *and* as something that potentially challenges social cohesion.

The ambivalence attaching to Manfred's character is further reinforced by ambiguous allusions to artistic or literary figures within the film. For example, the young scientist has a Max Beckmann self-portrait hanging in his home, and he compares himself to the literary figure of Julien Sorel from

¹⁹⁶ For example, Manfred's father is never shown in a work setting, and both Karl-Heinz's father in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, and Peter's father in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, are only ever shown at home.

Stendhal's (itself) deeply ambiguous *Le rouge et le noir*.¹⁹⁷ The Beckmann painting in Manfred's attic flat might be taken as a signifier of his egotism and isolation. Equally, it might denote the links between individualism and creativity. Although Expressionism was still officially frowned upon in the GDR at this time, it would, however, seem unlikely that the film-maker Wolf simply intended this strikingly powerful picture, by an artist who was included in the Nazi's 1937 exhibition of 'entartete Kunst', to serve as a signifier of Manfred's bourgeois decadence. Such a judgement would repeat fascist aesthetics, and the poster is more likely to be an oblique plea for a loosening of aesthetic bonds on GDR artists and generally for more tolerance of personal expression.

The Sorel allusion is even less clear cut. On the one hand, Stendhal's protagonist can be regarded as a cipher for ruthless male individualism. On the other, he also stands for the attempt to achieve personal advancement by personal merit in a reactionary and authoritarian society where blood counts. The child of a craftsman, Sorel attempts by self-invention to become the master of his own destiny, but ultimately ends on the guillotine. Like Julien, Manfred has a difficult relationship with his father, as well as problems with accepting social authority in general. Filled with a deep hatred for his father, who has scorned him for his intellectual leanings, Stendhal's protagonist is confronted with a number of ideal or possible fathers but, as Peter Brooks notes, 'slips from under the control of each of his figures of paternal authority when that control becomes too manifest'.¹⁹⁸ From today's perspective, it is tempting to

¹⁹⁷ In Christa Wolf's text Manfred is not reading Stendhal, but Heine. This would seem a rather more clearly socially critical allusion, and an author who was perhaps likely to be known by more of the audience.

¹⁹⁸ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, 5th edn (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 76.

detect an echo between Sorel's battle against the authorities of Restoration France, and the bourgeois Manfred's struggles for personal self-definition and professional fulfilment under the dictatorship of the proletariat – where membership of the working class counted in one's favour rather than high birth. But ultimately it is not altogether clear what we are intended to make of Manfred's expression of kinship with Stendhal's protagonist. Through the use of such veiled comparisons in the film, occasionally Wolf leaves us in doubt about his ideological position.

Certainly Konrad Wolf's contributions to contemporary discussions about the film indicate that he had not intended viewers only to blame Manfred for his failure to find a place in the GDR. After a film viewing with Cuban students, Wolf acknowledged that those around Manfred had also to accept their responsibility for his deciding to leave.¹⁹⁹ As well as revealing a more general humanistic impulse to include rather than exclude, the film-maker's comments imply that it was necessary for society to recognise the value of creative individuals like Manfred. On the other hand, Wolf's description of the GDR's obligations to characters such as Manfred was in itself not unproblematic, revealing a strange notion of the relationship between society and the individual. The director told the students: 'Die Frage und das Problem, das wir hier aufwerfen, besteht u. a. darin, daß wir solche Manfreds nicht allein lassen dürfen, daß unsere Gesellschaft nicht das Recht hat, diese Menschen sich selbst zu überlassen.'²⁰⁰ His statement expresses the very kind of social paternalism that an individual such as Manfred was in revolt against, and

¹⁹⁹ Konrad Wolf, 'Konrad Wolf beantwortet Fragen', p. 39.

²⁰⁰ Konrad Wolf, 'Konrad Wolf beantwortet Fragen', p. 40.

shows tensions between Wolf's apparent desire for a greater degree of individualism and liberty and his notion of socialist society.

The outsider figure of Manfred is set against the three socialist characters whom Rita meets in the public sphere. All three appear to be party members and are of working-class origin. In contrast to *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, in which the positive character and chief authority figure is symbolically linked to the GDR state apparatus through his function as a police inspector, the GDR is here more closely associated with the idea of the socialist collective via this cross-section of the male working population. The men embody a range of professional functions in key spheres of GDR society: manager, educator and skilled craftsman. The youngest, Wendland, is the head of the rolling stock factory, Schwarzenbach appears to have a senior position at the city's teacher training college, and Meternagel regains the position of *Brigadier* during the course of the narrative. The men's encounters with Manfred – direct and indirect – are latently hostile, lending a certain inevitability to his departure from the GDR. As Manfred's position deviates more and more from that represented by these three men, relations between Rita and himself steadily deteriorate. The film raises issues of tolerance and inclusiveness, but the basic plot is driven by the logic of division.

Not only class and ideological differences separate the socialists from Manfred. The men's optimism, energy and conviction are set against Manfred's disillusionment and scepticism. Wendland's belief in socialism and in the GDR system appears particularly unshakeable. Despite his inexperience, the young factory manager, who takes over the post after the previous incumbent flees to the West, quickly starts to improve the situation at the rolling stock factory. His confidence and optimism are not dented by the

magnitude of the task and the constant stream of problems. Even blatant injustices such as being criticised by the powers that be for something clearly out of his control – the cancellation of a delivery of metal by the West German firm Krupp – are received with gritty composure. Only after Manfred's *Republikflucht* does he momentarily show a hint of self-doubt, as he wonders aloud to Rita whether he could have done more for her lover, faintly echoing the culpability accepted by the male members of the establishment for the events in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*. Wendland, a lesser character than Schwarzenbach or Meternagel, serves primarily as Manfred's foil, but his role as his love rival is greatly downplayed in comparison with Wolf's book. Resilient and energetic the works' manager may be, but he also appears distinctly two-dimensional in comparison with the young scientist.

The pedagogue Schwarzenbach is one of Rita's closest confidants, and is associated with the values of principles of leniency and trust in her eyes. Having persuaded Rita to go to the city to take up the teacher training course, he acts as her mentor at the teacher training college. While her lover advises her to steer clear of difficulties at work and at college, and is sometimes unwilling to take her troubles seriously, Schwarzenbach provides a listening ear and reassurance, urging her to stick up for her beliefs. At the institute he also steps in to stop Mangold having Rita and her friend Sigrid expelled from the institute. However, Schwarzenbach is not indefatigable. He admits to Rita that she has helped him to overcome a period of uncertainty and restored his belief in human nature with her spontaneous honesty and openness. Moreover, the avuncular side that he displays to Rita is not extended to all.

The way in which he describes Mangold reveals an otherwise uncharacteristic ferocity, and in essence his words replicate the same kind of

polarised thinking displayed by the man whose dogmatism he attacks. The pedagogue warns Rita: '[E]ntweder die oder wir [...] Was Zäheres als der Spießer gibt es nicht. Am gefährlichsten sind die, die sich an uns hängen. Sie scheinen uns zu dienen. Und schaden uns um so schlimmer.' His quite vitriolic outburst clashes with the principles of trust and goodwill that he more generally preaches. Mangold is clearly intended to be perceived as a purely negative character and Schwarzenbach's blocking of his attempt to have Rita expelled from the college is depicted as a victory. However, here, due to the ambivalence of the filmic presentation, this rather threatening statement can be perceived as being directed at Manfred as well. In addition, Schwarzenbach does not link the dogmatism displayed by Mangold with the SED, but with the *Klassenfeind*. Like the figure of Paul in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, Schwarzenbach seems torn between the competing impulses of trust and intolerance. Like a number of the other older communist figures in the films that I analyse, he shows the same tendency to externalise blame for social problems rather than accepting that GDR socialism might also have its flaws.

Meternagel is the oldest of the three socialists and the most central character among them. Characterised by his untiring commitment to the cause and his scrupulousness, he is fighting to increase production at the works and stamp out the self-serving behaviour of his young co-workers. It is, notably, the socialist work *Brigade*, as in *Spur der Steine*, that is depicted as posing a threat to the socialist collective as a whole. The conflict between the old worker and the work team, who are concerned more with lining their own pockets than with the greater goal of socialism, reveals something of the generational tensions that were later to appear in the 'Rabbit' films. However, there is also a personal dimension to the dispute between Meternagel and the younger

Brigade members, for by making fraudulent wage claims they have betrayed him and cost him his post as *Brigadier*. This has made him wary and hesitant to act against their continuing dishonesty. Rita encourages Meternagel to intervene, and he manages to win over the former Nazi lieutenant Kuhl. The motives for the worker's conversion remain shrouded, but the film depicts the harnessing of Kuhl's considerable energies to the cause as a victory for socialism.

Meternagel serves as a positive counterpart to Manfred's father Herr Herrfurth, but he is no red-blooded worker hero. Instead, he is an ageing man who becomes increasingly infirm as the narrative proceeds.²⁰¹ While Herrfurth vainly attempts to command respect from his son, the old worker earns Rita's admiration and trust. The difference between Manfred's father, the works' accountant, and the *Brigadier* is manifest in their attitude to the work team members' acts of fraud. Though aware of the workers' racket, we learn that Herrfurth had exploited the incident to lever the worker out of his post, later simply dismissing the embezzled money as a trifle. By contrast, Meternagel is still struggling to save up to pay back the 3,000 marks embezzled while he was in charge. This unceasing engagement on behalf of the cause, however, takes its toll on his health, and at the end of the film when Rita returns to the city after her convalescence in the country the *Brigadier* is seriously ill and is being nursed at home by his wife. The individual cost of the struggle for GDR socialism is revealed, but again the film validates it as a price worth paying.

Sacrifice emerges as the dominant moral in the film. The private lives of the socialists are shown to suffer because of their work commitments.

²⁰¹ Hans Hardt-Hardtloff, who plays Meternagel, also looks considerably older than his professed age of nearly fifty. The actor also plays the old communist figure in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, in Klein's *Berlin um die Ecke*, and in Zschoche's *Karla*.

Wendland is divorced, and has a young son from this marriage who does not live with him. Schwarzenbach's young son becomes seriously ill when both his parents are busy at work, and Meternagel's high-principled attempt to pay back the embezzled factory funds means that his wife has to labour without the benefit of modern conveniences at home and do without domestic comforts. However, Rita's sacrifice is the most dramatic. *Der geteilte Himmel* is not without contradictions. The film indicates that personal deprivations such as these reflect deficiencies in GDR society still to be overcome. Yet these individuals' willingness to endure such difficulties and the transfer of Rita's affections serve to endorse the system. Her choice, in favour of the socialists, affirms the socialist collective as a social model that takes precedence over the couple or the family. Instead of having an individual love object, the young woman's concern and love have been 'nationalised'.

Despite this shift in emphasis from the family to the collective, gender and generation remain key signifying elements in a structure which ultimately valorizes the law of the father. Rita's relationship to Meternagel resembles a father-daughter relationship – an impression strengthened by the omission in Konrad Wolf's film of any reference to the young woman's deceased natural father or to Meternagel's daughters. When she joins the *Brigade* at the rolling stock factory, the *Brigadier* takes her under his wing, and later visits her at home when she is recovering from her breakdown. In another deviation from the literary text, Rita decides to move in with him and his wife upon her return to the city. In the book, Rita returns to the flat that she shared with Manfred and insists henceforth on paying rent to his father: a step which underlines her passage into adulthood and reflects a measure of independence. Consequently, in the film, her symbolic integration into society is given a stronger

paternalistic character. By having Rita move into Meternagel's flat, the film also establishes a metonymic connection between GDR state socialism and the utopian femininity that is, as I shall argue, embodied in Rita. The rebellion of the son against the father in the private sphere is contrasted with the young female figure's acceptance of the guidance of older male figures in the public sphere. Rita's integration is set against Manfred's isolation and eventual emigration. The relationship between the young woman and the old worker is a crucial tool for negotiating between a critique of authoritarianism and the legitimization of what is depicted as due authority.

On the surface Rita's story appears to be a tale of female emancipation, for it tells of a young woman breaking out of the domestic enclosure and into traditional male domains in a bid to achieve a social identity that exceeds definition through an affective relationship with a man. Indeed, in the eyes of Manfred's parents Rita embodies the New GDR Woman. Manfred's father describes her as 'ein moderner Mensch' when his reactionary wife expresses dismay at her decision to go to work in the rolling stock factory. Yet Rita, the youngest central character and a newcomer to the city, relies heavily on her older male mentors to guide her in these new domains. As I describe above, Meternagel, in particular, even appears to be akin to a substitute father. Moreover, her relations with the male members of this collective differ from their relations with one another. Whereas they are already agents in the world of work, who work more or less independently from one another, she forms affective relationships with them. In contrast with the male characters, if she acts, she tends to act upon others.

A frequent critique levelled against the GDR was that social relations remained centred on male-dominated institutions and relations of production,

and GDR-style emancipation often entailed women fitting into these structures.²⁰² Rita's entry into the workplace follows this pattern. My concern here, however, is with the value or function of Rita in the symbolic economy of the film, rather than with a criticism of the limits of women's emancipation in the GDR as they might be reflected in film. I would argue that her difference is pivotal for the plot. Whereas the men are depicted as historical agents, who are all flawed or limited in some way or another, she figures as a symbol of utopian wholeness. Her character bears many of the traits of 'imagined femininity' identified by Silvia Bovenschen in a range of German texts from the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which women are repeatedly associated with harmony and unity.²⁰³ In keeping with this long cultural tradition in Germany, with which Wolf was familiar, Rita embodies the utopian feminine, or 'das Ewig-Weibliche', for she embodies the ideal which this new society has not (by implication) yet attained and provides a glimpse of an unalienated future. At the same time she functions as a mirror that reveals the deficits of this society in its current stage of development.

Depicted as having a keen sense of fairness, the young woman responds emotionally and even bathetically to inequalities and selfishness. For instance, during a visit to a fair, Rita impulsively runs off to buy a balloon for a child who, unlike her playmate, did not receive one. Subsequently, she explains to her boyfriend that she wanted to make up for a past incident when her aunt deprived another child of a balloon for her sake. The story is the only episode

²⁰² See Gert Meyer und Kirsten Rohmeis, "'Kontrollierte Emanzipation': Thesen zu Patriarchalismus und Paternalismus im politischen System der DDR", in *Tradition und Fortschritt in der DDR: Neunzehnte Tagung zum Stand der DDR-Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 20. bis 23. Mai 1986* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1986), pp. 102-117 (p. 103).

²⁰³ Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit: Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

that Rita narrates from her childhood, and just the memory of the incident is enough to bring her close to tears, causing Manfred to describe her as 'ein weißer Rabe'. Her concern about injustice is expressed on several other occasions during the film. In one of their first meetings, she calls Manfred's vitriolic outburst against his father unjust. Later in a conversation with Meternagel at the works' ball, she uses the same word to describe the way the old worker is treated by other members of the *Brigade*. It is this naïve sense of right and wrong that frequently jolts the men into action, or restores their faith. At the factory and at the institute her presence functions as a catalyst. Her unmediated emotion stirs the impulse to reform.

Rita also appears 'naturally' social in much the same way as the main female characters in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and *Spur der Steine*, who both embody an integrative impulse.²⁰⁴ Her potential linking role is underlined by the way she is positioned in the picture frame. Frequently, she is framed with men either side of her. For example, at Ermisch's birthday party, and later in the factory, she sits flanked by Meternagel, on the one side, and Hänschen, the youngest member of the *Brigade*, on the other. Her conciliatory nature contrasts with the men's quarrelsomeness. Whereas they are often estranged from one another by generation, class, ideology and personal history, Rita is – at least initially – an undivided being. Her face, at times, becomes itself a symbol of this wholeness and goodness. It is often cast in a pool of light and shines forth like a beacon. At other times her face mirrors the alienated state of the men around her, as light and dark plays across it, serving, too, as an index of pain. The young woman is a figure made to link or make bonds, and who is

²⁰⁴ Finke has also noted that Rita is equipped with the traditional feminine attributes of social competence. See Finke, p. 31.

therefore torn by the conflicts of others. Her response to these conflicts is largely emotional. Rather than taking action, she suffers.²⁰⁵ In that sense the film conveys a passion played out in the female subject and shown through her face and body which serve as a screen for a collective drama.

The visual representation of Rita – the frequent close-ups, her placing in the frame and the manner in which her figure is lit, as well as modifications to the retrospective narration of her recovery – reveal, as I indicate above, a shift of emphasis in the representation of femininity between the literary and the film versions of *Der geteilte Himmel*. There is an element of the utopian feminine within the novel, but it is much stronger in the film. In her study of ‘imagined femininity’ Bovenschen detects a tendency among the male authors in her study to project their desire for harmony and an unalienated existence onto femininity. She writes:

Der im ‘Weibtum ruhende’ (Simmel), ‘Die Werte des geschlossenen Seins’ (Scheler) und der ‘Natureinheit’ (Scheffler) verkörpernden geschichtlich ungeformten ‘Wesenssubstanz Frau’ steht das endliche bürgerliche Subjekt Mann gegenüber, das, eingebettet in ein Gitterwerk sozialer Funktionen, wirkt und schafft. Von den realen Frauen ist hier nicht die Rede. Die beständige Beschwörung weiblicher Naturpotenz verrät eine Verschiebung. Die Sehnsucht nach der Versöhnung mit der Natur, nach einem nichtentfremdeten Dasein wird, ideologisch verzerrt, auf das Weibliche projiziert. Diese Verschiebung – eine häufig anzutreffende Figur – betrifft mithin nur das gedachte Weibliche; die Verwandtschaft der realen Frauen mit der Natur beschränkt sich darauf, daß sie wie diese Objekt der männlichen Zugriffe und Beherrschung sein sollen. Die weibliche ‘Natur’ wird einerseits zur Trägerin der ideellen männlichen Harmonie- und Einheitssehnsüchte stilisiert, andererseits schließt ihre Definition das Gebot der Unterwerfung und des Stillhaltens ein.²⁰⁶

Bovenschen points out that this kind of imagined femininity fulfilled a compensatory function for male subjects, but often involved the silencing and

²⁰⁵ Peter Hoff describes Rita’s renunciation of Manfred as her first proper act. See Hoff, p. 92.

²⁰⁶ Bovenschen, p. 32.

subordination of female characters or subjects. She is writing about the male subject in modern bourgeois or civil society. While purporting to transcend the categories of bourgeois society, the Marxist tradition, from which both Christa and Konrad Wolf come, emerged from the same Idealist culture which Bovenschen is criticising, and the emphasis upon class struggle and the prioritisation of production in GDR society left much of the underlying gender ideology intact. The plot structure of *Der geteilte Himmel* and its wider symbolic economy, particularly in the film version, reveal the influence of this older German tradition of thought and culture.

Rita's positioning between irreconcilable opposing male parties bears a structural resemblance to the father-daughter-lover plot of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*, such as Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* and Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*.²⁰⁷ The competing claims of two social power systems, represented by the bourgeois father and the aristocratic wooer, are played out across the body of the woman as the terrain of battle. Rita, much as the young female figure in the eighteenth century dramatic form, is reduced to the status of a token in male power struggles and becomes, consequently, the site of battle. Where the battle was once fought out between bourgeois order and aristocratic autocracy or between the law of the father and the imperious claims of young men's desire, now the battle lines divide the socialist order and a young man who rejects the legitimacy of that order. Unlike her literary ancestors Emilia or Luise, Rita does not die at the hands of the loser in the male power struggle. Nevertheless, after Manfred flees the GDR, forcing the either/or decision upon Rita, she subsequently collapses under the strain.

²⁰⁷ In *Emilia Galotti*, for example, the heroine perishes as a result of the irreconcilable clash between the demands of a (loving yet possessive) father and the imperious desire of a prince whom she perhaps unconsciously desires. The tragic heroine of *Kabale und Liebe* is torn between a (loving) father and a (possessive) lover.

As the film's flashback narrative develops, Rita increasingly finds it difficult to maintain the middle ground, to be the link holding together Manfred, on the one hand, and the socialist characters Meternagel, Schwarzenbach and Wendland, on the other. During the test run of the newly manufactured carriage, Rita's inability to forge a bond between the two sides is prefigured in the spatial constellation of the characters. She stands on the same side of the carriage as the two committed socialists, while Manfred stands on the other side of the aisle facing out of the window with his back to her. Later in the sequence, Manfred and Wendland argue by the side of the train, Rita is pictured facing the camera – silent but pained – positioned in between the two feuding parties. At times the rhetoric of the opposing parties appears so demanding or strident that it even threatens the integrity of the female subject.

In a montage sequence that is intended to represent her recollection of telling Manfred about her conversation with Schwarzenbach about Mangold's dogmatism, the men appear to be engaged in a verbal tug-of-war over her. The film switches between shot - reverse shot close-ups of the two men in profile situated at opposite sides of the picture plane, occasionally intercutting full-face close-ups of Rita in the centre of the picture. By the end of the sequence Rita literally comes over to Schwarzenbach's side; her face appears in the left-hand side of the picture frame. Unable to overcome the division in the male camp, and seen only from the outside, Rita can only make a choice for or against positions represented by the male characters. One contemporary critic, Fred Gehler, noted that the film strengthens the impression that the men are battling for Rita, writing: 'Der Film akzentuiert in einigen Szenen das Wesen der Auseinandersetzungen als ein Ringen um Rita, um ihre Entscheidung. [...] In und durch Rita wird der Konflikt zweier Lebensauffassungen ausgetragen

[...].’ Earlier in the same article he also remarks upon Rita’s passivity, observing: ‘Sie wirkt als Resonanzboden für die um sie herum ausgetragenen und nicht ausgetragenen Widersprüche.’²⁰⁸ His comments underline my argument that the film turns Rita into a signifier of male power.

The narrative present of Konrad Wolf’s film, which charts Rita’s recovery after her breakdown, reveals a strong shift away from the association of femininity with rational agency. In the literary text, as Alexander Stephan notes, Rita’s retrospective rationalisation of her emotional decision not to leave the GDR for Manfred from her new mature perspective is a key element of the process of subject formation.²⁰⁹ Heide Tarnowski-Seidel argues the film erases key elements of this process, noting:

Der Film zeigt zwar immer wieder die nachdenkende Protagonistin und spielt auch die Inhalte ihres Rückblickens in ausgebauten Szenen durch, eines jedoch unterschlägt er konsequent: die Ebene der auch verbal artikulierten Reflexion rückschauender Selbstdeutung, welche sich wie ein roter Faden durch die Erzählung zieht. Das rückblickende Ich, das uns zwar optisch nahegebracht wird, hat im Film keine Stimme. Indem der Film diese Ebene eliminiert, verzichtet er auf die Vermittlung eines Prozesses von Ich-Konstitution.²¹⁰

The use of an extradiegetic narrator, speaking in the third person, to mark Rita’s steps to recovery, makes her appear much less an interpreting consciousness and gives her story a more paradigmatic character. In particular, in the prologue and epilogue, Tarnowski-Seidel points out that there is a tendency to homogenise the story’s different narrative perspectives into a collective ‘wir’, and to erase an individual level of experience.

²⁰⁸ Fred Gehler, ‘Die pädagogischen Provinzen der Rita S.’, *Sonntag* (Berlin), 19 July 1964.

²⁰⁹ Alexander Stephan, *Christa Wolf*, 3rd edn (Munich: Beck, 1987), p. 49.

²¹⁰ Heide Tarnowski-Seidel, ‘Die Vernichtung einer Spur: Zur Verfilmung der Erzählung *Der geteilte Himmel* von Christa Wolf’, in *Literaturverfilmung*, ed. by Wolfgang Gast (Bamberg: Buchners, 1993), pp. 104–112 (p. 107).

Tarnowski-Seidel's painstaking comparison of the film's dialogue and the literary text reveals that many of the narrator's monologues superficially resemble passages in the book. However, sometimes sentences originally in the first person have been converted into the third person, and on other occasions sentences originally in the third person, though clearly focalised through Rita, are carried over in modified form, and adjacent first person sentences dropped. In the first sequence, for example, which introduces the flashback with the use of a split screen device, the narrator comments: 'So begann ihre Geschichte, eine banale Geschichte, wenn man will. Übrigens liegt sie hinter ihr. Zwei Jahre ihres Lebens liegen hinter ihr.' In comparison, the literary version reads: 'Ihre Geschichte ist banal, denkt sie, in manchem auch beschämend. Übrigens liegt sie hinter ihr. Was noch zu bewältigen wäre, ist dieses aufdringliche Gefühl: Die zielen genau auf mich.'²¹¹ The narrator's words reveal a switch from Rita as a focaliser, whose thoughts are conveyed in free indirect discourse, to Rita as the focalised object of an impersonal, authoritative extradiegetic narrator who comments upon her from above, as it were. Rita's implicit realisation that her breakdown was a suicide attempt – which is possibly the key signifier of her growth in Wolf's story – is simply omitted.

Aside from the extradiegetic narrator's rather austere and sparse commentary upon Rita's progress, her recovery is only marked spatially and by her gradual resumption of contacts with the outside world; Rita emerges from bed, approaches the window, goes outside and is seen approaching the motorway bridge with Meternagel, then, in the last scene before her return to the city, we see her walking over the road bridge with her friend Sigrid. Deprived of a voice, Rita is reduced to a suffering body. It is only once she has

²¹¹ Christa Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel*, 18th edn (Munich: dtv, 1985), p 11.

returned to the city that we get an impression of her actively interpreting her past – when Rita visits Schwarzenbach at the teacher training institute, and describes her trip to West Berlin. Moreover, the whole narrative present which focuses upon Rita's breakdown and recovery after her separation from Manfred is given considerably less weight than in Wolf's novel, being pared down to five brief scenes charting Rita's convalescence in the country, and a further five sequences in the city. There is a conflict in the way Rita's process-of-becoming is represented. While the narrator's commentary describes it in terms of a process of coming to terms with division and loss, the way her recovery is represented makes it almost seem as if she is regaining something that had been lost. This solace intensifies the utopian aura surrounding Rita, so that she moves along an axis of almost religious passion of suffering and of redemption.

Other critics have also drawn attention to the shortcomings of the representation of Rita in the film's narrative present. Yet many tend implicitly or explicitly to blame the inability of the filmic medium itself to successfully convey a process of internal reflection, pointing out that the film does not correspond to the film-makers' expressed intentions. For example, Günter Jordan observes:

Natürlich ist die 'Vorderhandlung', die Genesung Ritas, zu kurz gekommen, die 'Erinnerungen' können nur ungenügend, als *ihre* Sicht wahrgenommen werden, sie objektivieren sich schnell und kollidieren mit der Ambition der Autoren.²¹²

The film medium is, indeed, not very suited to conveying the language of thinking, and as I mention in the chapter introduction, the film-making

²¹² Günter Jordan, 'Konrad Wolfs Filme *Leute mit Flügeln*, *Der geteilte Himmel* und *Ich war neunzehn* und ihre Bedeutung für die Gestaltung des sozialistischen Menschenbildes im DEFA-Gegenwartsfilm der siebziger Jahre' (unpublished diploma thesis, Deutsche Hochschule für Filmkunst Potsdam-Babelsberg, 1969), p. 39.

collective did decide to retain the narrative present strand because it was thought absolutely essential for the representation of Rita's development, for, as a scriptwriter explained: '[...] von hier aus nimmt Rita eine Analyse ihres Verhaltens in der Vorgeschichte vor. Mit ihrer Genesung reift die Kraft dieser Analyse, wie Rita durch ihre Erlebnisse zur Frau gereift ist.'²¹³ For all that, other decisions taken by the production team, such as the decision to use a much older woman's voice for the commentaries, seem to contradict this concern with depicting Rita as an interpreting consciousness.

Comments made by the team indicate that it was not just the perceived unsuitability of the actress's voice that motivated these changes, but also scepticism about whether a young woman could come to such conclusions. Barthel describes how various samples of Renate Blume's voice were presented to colleagues for discussion before the starting of shooting and then explains:

Schon zu dieser Zeit gab es Meinungen, die bezweifelten, daß dieses Mädchen, eben erst zu eigenen tiefen Erkenntnissen gelangt, in der Lage sein sollte, daraus Schlußfolgerungen zu ziehen und Verallgemeinerungen zu geben. Die 'Stimme' erschien unglaublich. Hinzu kam, daß die Mittel, über die Renate Blume verfügte, noch nicht ausreichten, um einen schwierigen Kommentartext gründlich gestalten zu können.²¹⁴

Furthermore, the fact that the student actress was chosen because of her 'type', despite the acknowledged disadvantages that casting an inexperienced actress might bring with it, also indicate that the film-makers were rather more interested in the youthful, innocent, vulnerable image that she was able to project than in her ability to represent convincingly a process of personal development. In my analysis of the representation of space in the next section I

²¹³ Kurt Barthel, 'Der geteilte Himmel: Zur filmischen Umsetzung', *film-wissenschaftliche mitteilungen*, 3 (1964), 565-595 (p. 566).

²¹⁴ Barthel, p. 591.

shall look at the links between Rita and nature, and how her image offers a sense of wholeness and cohesion in the face of alienation and division.

No Place like Home

The differences and divisions that characterise the relationships between the central figures in *Der geteilte Himmel* are reflected in a number of spatial antitheses. Along with the contrast between East Germany and West Berlin, the film operates with a number of oppositions existing within the GDR, such as that between public and private spheres, and provincial city and country. It is Rita, who has no fixed place in society, who moves between all of these locations.

The split between the urban and the rural is gendered. Rita arrives in the city from the country, and her utopian femininity is linked with her rural origins. While the countryside is represented as the realm of the mother, connected with wholeness and healing, the city is the domain of the father, associated with division and alienation. This would lead one to expect a narrative of a return to nature, of a recaptured bucolic idyll. Rita does indeed return to her rural home, but only for regeneration, after which she heads back to Halle. The reversal points to ideological inconsistencies within Marxist thought, pulled as it is between ideas of forward-looking technological determinism and nostalgia for pre-industrialised, less alienated labour forms. Woman is thus used to provide a link back to a world before smokestacks.

The depiction of West Berlin reveals anti-modernistic impulses similar to those we see in the portrayal of that half of the city in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*. Its representation as an oppressively modern city is part of the

film's narrative strategy to define the GDR as an industrial nation that might be presently lagging behind West Germany in economic terms – but which retains a more human scale. The film attempts to denote the urban GDR as a more natural and socially cohesive space than the West by turning Rita into something of a bearer for the utopian natural realm in the city, and her journey, from country to city to country and back again, creates some sense of renewal. She is linked with a state of wholeness that is simultaneously associated with past, present and future and yet is not properly any of these.

In contrast to *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, *Der geteilte Himmel* places the emphasis not upon fostering attachment to any existing locale in the GDR, but upon creating identification with the socialist collective and the future realisation of a socialist utopia. This section will concentrate on this nebulous space of identification, examining the contrasts between East and West, public and private, city and country. I will show how these spaces are surveyed using the newcomer, and demonstrate how her closeness to the natural world and her apparent existence, at times on a different spatial and temporal plane, is related to her role as a symbol for utopian promise.

The provincial city of Halle is the main setting of the film. Rita acts as the link between the central urban locales: the Herrfurths' home, the rolling stock works and the college.²¹⁵ The greatest proportion of screen time in *Der geteilte Himmel* is devoted to life in the work sphere, in particular the rolling stock factory, and we see how Rita begins to feel increasingly at home there. Representation of space in *Der geteilte Himmel* is complex, and the images indicate, in a number of different ways, changing relationships between figures

²¹⁵ Hoff, pp. 92-93.

and space.²¹⁶ For example, the first sequence at the factory, as Thomas Kühnel observes, begins with a series of rapidly intercut close-ups of machines drilling and welding that indicate Rita's sense of disorientation and alarm.²¹⁷ Her self-consciousness and sense of being out-of-place is emphasised by the following frame. The disorientating images give way to a lingering, panning shot across the faces of the assembled men of the *Brigade* Ermisch, whose lascivious looks are directed across the picture frame at Rita, who finally comes into view in the right-hand corner of the frame. However, in later sequences the increasing physical proximity of Rita to the members of the *Brigade* underlines her growing ease in the works and her growing allegiance to the collective.

This development is set against the difficulties that Rita experiences from the outset at home with the Herrfurths and as time goes on in her domestic life with Manfred. The frosty atmosphere in the Herrfurths' family home is initially contrasted with the warmth and intimacy of Manfred's attic flat. The camerawork underlines the coldness of relations in the bourgeois family; shots of the dining room with its heavy *altdeutsch* furniture are repeatedly framed with the family members at the dining table positioned considerably beneath the optical middle of the picture, emphasising the distance between them. By contrast, in Manfred's rooftop eyrie the lovers are shown in close-up, talking, playing and chastely making love. Nevertheless, the couple become increasingly estranged, and in a number of shots they are shown either visually separated from one another by the struts of the window pane or alone in the frame. Shortly before Manfred decides to leave for the

²¹⁶ For a short analysis of the different meanings attached to space, see Thomas Kühnel, "'Dieser seltsame Stoff Leben': Konrad Wolfs *Der geteilte Himmel* (1964) zwischen Experiment und Kritik", *Der DEFA-Film Erbe oder Episode: Augen-Blick 14* (Marburg: Schüren-Pressen, 1993), pp. 25-39 (pp. 32-37).

²¹⁷ Kühnel, p. 35.

West, their alienation from one another is stressed by their depiction back-to-back, each reflected in the mirror of the other's dressing table as they dress to go to the professor's soirée. The refuge-like character of the 'Gondel', the attic flat, where the couple lives together, is also gradually undermined. Its fragility and vulnerability are emphasised by camera shots that increasingly linger on its glass roof, and by the time Rita returns from her convalescence it has become an empty shell. Whereas the factory sequences were filmed on location in order to lend them authenticity, the attic flat sequences were filmed on set to convey an air of precariousness and insolidity.²¹⁸ The negative depiction of the Herrfurth's home and the gradual deconstruction of Rita's attic home underline the film's political message – that it is ultimately impossible to withdraw into a private world and turn one's back on society.

Despite the importance attached to the workplace in *Der geteilte Himmel*, neither the factory nor any other filmic space can vie in its emotional warmth or its individuality and creativity with Manfred's flat, as it is first seen by Rita.²¹⁹ Moreover, a degree of ambivalence is also implicit in the visual representation of the works. The image used to introduce the work sequence, the sky bifurcated by a line of poplar trees, can, for example, be interpreted as representing division as well as representing the idea of Rita's path of personal discovery. Konrad Wolf acknowledged that many of the spatial symbols that he used in *Der geteilte Himmel* were intended to be polyvalent.²²⁰ In the sequence

²¹⁸ Kühnel, p. 37.

²¹⁹ Private spaces such as these, which express the individuality of their inhabitants, become increasingly important in later films. I am thinking, for example, of Sabine Wulff's room in the eponymous film directed by Erwin Stranka in 1978, of Sunny's room in Konrad Wolf's 1980 film *Solo Sunny* and Franziska's room in Lothar Warneke's 1981 production *Unser kurzes Leben*. As I shall show in my last chapter, Kati's room in *Spur der Steine* also has an individuality and warmth absent from the other spaces.

²²⁰ In his discussion about *Der geteilte Himmel* with Cuban students, Wolf said: 'Symbole haben Vor- und Nachteile, man kann viel durch sie erzählen, lassen aber immer die Möglichkeit der verschiedenen Deutung,' but added, 'Ein gutes Symbol unterscheidet sich von einem

in which Rita goes to visit Wendland at the works before her journey to the West the picture plane is also cut vertically, this time by lines of carriages, and Rita and Wendland walk between the rows. Once more the avenue of carriages appears to denote the idea of a personal journey and the road into the future. Yet, perceived in the context of Rita's imminent trip to West Berlin and her final parting from Manfred, it can also be seen as another image of division.²²¹ Thus, possible associations can be made between the socialist battle to increase production, the building of the Wall to stop the economic haemorrhaging of the GDR, and the splitting of the self due to the irreconcilability between public and private, alienation at the workplace, and the loss of German identity.

The divisions of the city are set against the wholeness of the countryside, and the film establishes a link between Rita's utopian femininity and her rural origins. The opposition between the rural and the urban, which recurs in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, is presented most starkly at the start of the film. The opening sequence consists of a rapid series of images showing the city from dizzying perspectives and culminates in a shot of Rita collapsing at work. The action then switches to the countryside and to images of Rita convalescing at home. Here the cutting rhythm is much more measured, and shots are taken straight on. A quite different aesthetic is used to denote both spaces. Whereas verticals and diagonals repeatedly split the frame during the city sequence, in the country soothing horizontals and curves predominate. The juxtaposition makes it seem as if the city itself is deadly. The association of the

schwachen dadurch, daß es die Phantasie des Menschen auf Grund seiner eigenen Erlebnisse anregt und entwickelt und man nie eine eng-eindeutige Assoziation erreichen kann und soll.' He seems torn between wanting to communicate a message and wanting his viewers to come to their own conclusion. See Konrad Wolf, 'Konrad Wolf beantwortet Fragen', p. 39.

²²¹ On the ambivalence of such motifs, see Harry Blunk, *Die DDR in ihren Spielfilmen: Reproduktion und Konzeption der DDR-Gesellschaft im neueren DEFA-Gegenwartsspielfilm* (Munich: Profil, 1984), p. 48.

countryside primarily with Rita's mother and Rita herself, indicates a link between Woman and nature, while the city, by contrast, is depicted as the realm of the father, associated with men and with industrial development, but also with alienation.

The young woman's return home after her breakdown is a deviation from Wolf's text and suggests an association between her recovery and the natural surroundings. Although there are some pastoral, nostalgic and utopian aspects to the representation of Rita's rural home in Christa Wolf's novel, it also has discordant elements that are omitted from the film. In the novel, for example, Rita grows up in a household racked with domestic discord, for her aunt, the houseowner, only begrudgingly takes in her dead brother's wife and child who have fled from the far eastern reaches of Hitler's Reich. The young woman's home is also part of a village that is experiencing its share of the difficulties of contemporary GDR life and which can only offer restricted opportunities to a bright, young woman. Leaving the country is seen as an inevitable part of growing up. The rural is associated with her childhood, and Rita's move to the city represents a stage in her individual development, as well as echoing a step in the development of society. Despite occasionally longing for her old home with its less complex social relations and relatively unspoiled natural environment, Rita realises that she has outgrown it and cannot return. In the film, her return to the country to recuperate cuts across this sense of linear progression, lending the film something of a backward-looking, nostalgic feel. Despite the motorway bridge in the background, the rural home to which Rita returns to recover from her breakdown has a timeless,

rather remote air, seemingly belonging to a different realm.²²² Furthermore, her wearing of a childish white Alice band during her convalescence promotes an impression of a return to childhood.

Anti-modernist tendencies, suggested by this tension between country and city in the East, are further reinforced by the film's depiction of West Berlin as a modern city with an atomised social structure and a dearth of green space.²²³ Manfred has become more isolated in the West. When Rita first enters his room, he is sitting alone at his desk and does not turn around but continues staring resolutely out of the window. The shots are framed to emphasise the emptiness of the room, which has the same deathly, stultifying air as his parents' home, and the silence is only broken by the remorseless chatter of the television set that only serves to underline this isolation. In later scenes, blaring, discordant car horns and blinking neon lights promote a sense of claustrophobia and alienation. The cold modernity of the Western location is also emphasised by the 1960s architecture, which contrasts with Halle's mainly turn-of-the-century buildings and the older architecture in its environs. The film's aesthetic implies that the quicker pace of technological change, for which Manfred admired the West, has not improved the quality of life, rather the contrary in fact.

In West Berlin nature appears to be under onslaught from urban development. Rita and Manfred are shown sitting in a park outlined against the stark, regular lines of a modern office block. In Halle, by contrast, the couple are at least able to retreat to the riverside, and this place by the bridge over the Saale is a place of reconciliation for the lovers. Manfred underlines the

²²² Barton Byg also notes the rather timeless aspect of this space. See Byg, 'Geschichte', pp. 105-106.

²²³ Feinstein discusses the opposition that the film creates between what he calls a 'quasi-organic community' in the East and the 'sterility' of the West. See Feinstein, p. 178.

oppressively urban character of their surroundings, as well as highlighting West Berlin's lack of a rural hinterland, with his comment: 'Eine Stadt ohne Hinterland, grausam sag' ich dir'. His words also trigger memories of their joyous trips into the countryside surrounding Halle, such as their car excursion on the day that Manfred is awarded his PhD when any divisions between them just appear to dissolve. The first shot of the couple shows them separated by the glass partition of the car windshield. In the next shot the frame disappears. By contrast, in West Berlin the association between the city and their division is emphatic.

In the depiction of West Berlin there is, as in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, also an attempt to reverse the equation associating the West with freedom and the East with confinement. Paradoxically, despite Manfred's private isolation, the couple do not seem to be able to find any public space in the city where they can be alone or find peace and quiet. Most of the topoi shown in the West are associated with consumption and leisure, yet the atmosphere is far from relaxing. The recreational spaces appear claustrophobic or overcrowded, and the people exude more of an air of weary purposelessness than enjoyment. In Café Kranzler, the only specifically identifiable West Berlin location, Rita and Manfred's view of the outside world is oppressively barred by blinds. Later, as they sit together in one of the local parks people on a bench behind them jostle for position, forced to constantly squeeze together to allow newcomers to take a seat. A woman pushing a pram walks out of the frame, then back into it again, returning almost immediately, pushing the child in the opposite direction. This lone woman and child stand in contrast to the sociable huddle of babies presumably being transported to nursery in an earlier street

scene in the East. This tension between atomisation and confinement draws upon older images of the modern city.

As well as this anti-modernistic bias in the representation of West Berlin, one of the film's images also indicates that women in the West are less emancipated than in the East, and hints that the Federal Republic is attempting to conceal rather than break from the Nazi past. A massive advert for Persil depicts a housewife triumphantly clutching a box of washing powder in her uplifted arm. Her almost heroic pose has a bathetic effect, implying that values in the West are distorted by capitalism, and that women are being trivialised by their allotted role in society. The brand of the powder also evokes the lax process of denazification under the Allies in West Germany, when so-called *Persilscheine*, certificates whitewashing people's personal histories, were issued to some who had been involved with the Nazi regime. Despite the objections of one reader who complained that the film failed to distinguish sufficiently between East and West, the Western sequences are in fact rather heavy-handed and stereotypical, as other contemporaries such as director Kurt Maetzig, though in general a fan of the film, were not slow to point out.²²⁴

The West Berlin sequence, which comes very close to the end of the film, emphasises the otherness of the West, and refutes the notion of a common German identity asserted by a number of the characters in the narrative. In an attempt to persuade Rita to join him in the West, Manfred evokes the topographical nation, asking Rita: 'Ist es dann zuviel verlangt von dir zu bitten: Geh mit? Mach doch mal die Augen zu. Hör mal ein paar Namen: Bodensee, Rhein, Schwarzwald. Ist das nicht auch Deutschland?' The emotional force that

²²⁴ Peter Mahling, 'Reizt zu Zwischenrufen', *Sonntag*, No 42, 1964, complains about the inadequate differentiation between East and West. For Maetzig's contra-position, see *Probleme*, p. 38.

Manfred aims to achieve by naming such traditional German landscape topoi is counteracted by the couple's modern surroundings that make these places seem almost imaginary or unreal. Earlier, at the professor's dinner party, the scientists depict the division of East and West as an arbitrary partition of a nation joined by a common language and common ethnicity. Yet, in her description of her trip to the West, Rita describes the existence of a common language as a factor which increases her sense of alienation and isolation.²²⁵ She tells Schwarzenbach: 'Man ist doch schrecklicherweise allein. Schlimmer als im Ausland, weil man die eigene Sprache hört.' *Der geteilte Himmel* challenges the cohesive force of the traditional pillars of national identity: ethnicity, language and geography, and seeks to establish GDR-specific values to justify the division of East and West. *Der geteilte Himmel* does not primarily attempt to create a sense of belonging through place, but rather seeks to secure identification with the collective and a utopian vision for the future. However, its valorization of nature and ambivalent representation of modernity stands in tension with its narrative of technological progress.

In the final sequences Rita's decision to move out of the home that she shared with Manfred and move in with her mentor from the factory is intended to underline their affective ties and provide a new sense of belonging. As a strategy to bridge the gap between public and private, it is clearly only a token gesture and does not truly solve this basic contradiction. It is Rita herself who functions as a cipher for a potential social whole. In the very last frame we see the city square at night teeming with people, a scene preceded by a series of shots of Rita outside in the city. The juxtaposition of her image with the crowd in this manner evokes a sense of togetherness that contrasts with the atomised

²²⁵ Feinstein makes the same point, p. 178.

relations represented as existing in the West. As a symbol for socialist utopia, Rita provides a passive sense of presence where there is absence. Yet this comes at the cost of her own perpetual displacement as well as her objectification, making it, as I shall argue in more depth in the final section, harder to identify with her as a subject. As well as extolling the socialist collective as the prime form of social organisation, and seeking to differentiate East from West, the narrative of *Der geteilte Himmel* also clearly seeks to position the GDR in relation to the past and the future. Again the socialist male characters are shown to represent quite different historical narratives from Manfred and his father, and Rita once more plays a role quite distinct from that any of the male characters, as I shall examine in the next section.

After the Wall: Moving out of the Past and into the Future?

The narrative past of *Der geteilte Himmel* is set in the two years leading up to the building of the Wall, while the narrative present starts in its immediate aftermath, although both book and film only mention the event obliquely. The literary narrative begins with Rita regaining consciousness after her breakdown in 'jenen letzten Augusttagen des Jahres 1961' while the film starts with an even more nebulous reference to 'jenem Sommer'.²²⁶ Like *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* and *Spur der Steine*, *Der geteilte Himmel* uses a flashback structure in an attempt to explore and then close off the troubles of the past and set out a vision for the future. It seeks to define the GDR's relationship to the more distant Nazi past, overcome the crisis of the *Mauerbau*, and project a humanised future distinct from that of the West.

²²⁶ Christa Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel*, p. 9.

Once again the film instrumentalises gender difference to manage these manifold aims. Much of Rita's childhood is omitted by the film, promoting the impression that she is a historical innocent. The male characters, by contrast, struggle to tell of history and to shape meaning, and hence to legitimise power. A crucial issue of contention in the male power contest is the historical narrative through which the GDR and its trajectory are to be defined, crucially with relation to the Nazi past and the state's early years. Rita's choice in favour of the socialist males is intended to validate their approach to the past and insert her into a proletarian tradition. Whereas the men tell or do, Rita embodies, represents the ideal of a humanised future. She thus provides teleological comfort for the socialist males involved in the long struggle towards communism and functions as a marker of difference between East and West.

Her breakdown, suffering and recovery represent an attempt to come to terms with the final division of the two German states and provide some sense of a new beginning. At the same time Rita's symbolic role undermines the film's attempt to project forward, for it renders her future agency in the new society implausible. Occasionally her passivity and visual presentation appear to lift her out of the flow of time. This also makes it difficult to identify with her as a character at the end of the film. Manfred's energy and strong personality also risk making him into the spectator's main identification figure. Thus, in terms of history, too, the film is not necessarily ideologically persuasive.

Manfred's account of the transition from Nazism to state socialism deviates from the GDR's standard anti-fascist narrative that sought to portray the East as a land of innocents and the West as a Nazi bastion. Rita's lover

does not regard his father's conversion from Nazi party to SED member as untypical. His own memories of the early GDR also do not exactly cast the young state in a positive light. He recalls an attempt by his teachers to trump up accusations against him and some schoolfriends by branding their basement club a centre of political opposition. Manfred also describes to Rita an incident from his student years when his ideas for reform were shouted down and his best friend in the audience, a journalist, failed to stand up for him, being more concerned with safeguarding his career than with protecting Manfred or defending his principles. The young scientist is dogged by these bitter memories which have made him sceptical about GDR socialism and human nature in general. His experiences serve, to some extent, to explain his social alienation, and represent an acknowledgement of the existence of former Nazis in the SED and a more oblique admission of Stalinist tendencies in GDR history.

Manfred's backward-looking stance and his emphasis upon the continuity between Nazi past and GDR present is, however, implicitly called into question by being offset against the very different attitudes of the socialist male characters.²²⁷ His counterpart Wendland, who appears to have been committed unswervingly to socialism from his youth, only seems to look forward, while the older socialists offer a competing narrative about the GDR's relationship to Nazism. Schwarzenbach admits his Nazi indoctrination during the Third Reich and Meternagel describes his involvement in the war, but their stories of their lives emphasise change rather than continuity. They stress their break with Nazism as the pivotal moment in their lives and their prime

²²⁷ I disagree with Feinstein's observation that 'Manfred's prior life is shrouded in mystery' and that he is the character with the most attenuated relationship with the past. See Feinstein, p. 183.

motivating force. Schwarzenbach tells students at the institute that at the end of the war he had wanted to join the Werewolves, a group sworn to committing suicide in the event of a Nazi defeat. Nevertheless, he explains that the forbearance of the Party enabled him to leave this past behind. The older Meternagel fought in the war but 'saw the light' in a Soviet prisoner-of-war camp. Both men's experiences of the Nazi past have instilled in them a more general faith in the possibility of change, and they construct a very different relationship than Manfred between the GDR present and the Nazi past. The older socialists also relate a type of history different from that of their bourgeois counterpart. The young scientist's memories are intimate recollections of experiences that have taken place within everyday familial or other close, interpersonal, everyday contexts. Acts of personal betrayal and hypocrisy predominate among those recollections. He represents them as important formative experiences. Both his own development and his explanation of others' behaviour are psychologised. For example, Manfred describes the scholar's intolerance as a response to his own harsh treatment in his youth. By contrast, the older socialists' stories are partly de-individualised, tending to elide any emotional or subjective dimension. On the whole they explain events using larger, supraindividual interpretative frameworks. The key episodes in their past are related to the war or the immediate post-war period and involve their acknowledgement or fostering of ties with monolithic collectives, such as the working-class or the Party. Belief in the Party, in Marxism-Leninism, and the investment of one's energies for the cause are depicted as a way of overcoming the past.

At the works' dance, a key sequence in *Der geteilte Himmel* concerning the issue of history, Meternagel provides Rita with a strikingly clipped account of his past:

Vater ist gefallen. Mutter hat Wäsche gewaschen. Wo sauber ist, herrscht keine Not, sagte die Fürsorgerin. [...] Dabei hätte uns eine heile Hose besser auf dem Hintern geholfen. Was war man dann schon? Gelernter Tischler und da war man auch noch stolz darauf. Da hatte der Krieg nur so lang gelauert, bis daß wir groß waren. Drei Jahre habe ich Bäume gefällt in Sibirien. Aber ich habe später gemerkt, daß das mehr mit Tischlerei zu tun hat, als über Kimme und Korn zu schießen. [...] Wir hatten die Macht, das verstand ich. Sie setzten mich auch gleich auf einen Instrukteurstuhl. Das war die letzte ruhige Minute in meinem Leben [...]

The old worker mentions neither the victims targeted through his gunsights, nor his personal privations suffered during his time in the POW camp in Siberia. Here, in his recollections, Meternagel subsumes individual motives and feelings beneath a semi-personalised, semi-collective narrative about coming to class consciousness in a Soviet camp. In his account of his Nazi indoctrination, Schwarzenbach implies that his allegiance to the National Socialists represented a denial of his class identity and was thus based on a false consciousness from which he could liberate himself. He describes his conversion from Nazism to socialism in terms of a grateful response to the Party's benevolence and leniency – and his life thereafter as an attempt to repay the debt.

The men's storytelling unleashes conflicting sentiments in the spectator. The socialists' resolute forward-looking attitudes make Manfred's bitterness appear rather self-indulgent. In particular, Meternagel's way of talking about his war-time experiences has a certain aura of masculine fortitude. However, it also simplifies and sanitizes traumatic events. Furthermore, the older men's stories reveal an unsettling sense of obligation to a faceless party, and are

psychologically unsatisfactory in comparison with the young scientist's. As a result the spectator's attention and identification are divided. Manfred's much more personal mode of retelling the past has considerable force in the film, helping to provide the spectator with a real sense of conflict and giving his character depth. This, in turn, intensifies the spectator's sense of Rita's trial and suffering, for Manfred is not just an empty, selfish egotist; his bitterness and the force of his expression are a powerful element in *Der geteilte Himmel*.

In contrast to the majority of the men, Rita, as I indicate earlier in the section, is represented at the beginning of the flashback narrative as a character without history. Her arrival in the city is represented almost as an entry into the flow of time. The effacement of details of Rita's early personal life, which in the novel has not been left untouched by the war and by family difficulties, underlines this effect.²²⁸ In addition, Rita's frequent representation in close-up in both past and present narrative strand lifts her out of space and time, while her circular trajectory gives an impression of regeneration rather than personal *Bildung*, allowing her to retain some sense of utopian promise. Rather like Dieter and Angela in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* who symbolise future hope and have a symbolic rather than a blood father, so the relationship that Rita develops with Meternagel serves to root the fatherless young woman in a class and national GDR tradition. The uniting of an orphan figure with a surrogate father figure also occurs in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, and frequently forms a narrative strategy representing the young state as something distinct from the

²²⁸ Blunk appears to be the only commentator who has noted this point, but he attributes this omission to the difficulties of conveying this past with specifically filmic means. He notes, however, that Manfred narrates his past. See Blunk, *Die DDR in ihren Spielfilmen*, p. 40.

past, while simultaneously affording it historical legitimacy and access to a tradition.²²⁹

The familial aspect of this narrative is emphasised in the dance sequence in which Meternagel tells Rita about his past, while Manfred and Wendland expound alternative visions of the future. The juxtaposition of narratives does not occur in Christa Wolf's story.²³⁰ As Rita stands by her surrogate father's side, the two young men vie for the daughter's hand. When the young woman complains to Meternagel that they are arguing about history, Meternagel counters: 'Das denkst du. Aber laß nun mal. Sieh mal den Wendland an. Er ist ein richtiger Mann geworden.' Meternagel here appears to be endorsing Wendland as his choice of a partner for her. As the camera switches its attention from one group to another, the dance hall's mirrored walls continue to reflect the other party in the background. The interpolation of Meternagel's life story with this theoretical debate is intended, I would argue, to provide a concrete refutation of Manfred's pessimistic views about human nature and historical agency, and to support Wendland's historical materialist theories. Rita's positioning aligns her with this historical tradition, and also serves to legitimise the socialist characters' narrative by their association with her utopian femininity.

In the test drive sequence, which is a key episode for the exposition of GDR's relationship to the future, once more Rita shows, while the men do or tell. The young factory manager and the old *Brigadier* are depicted as the

²²⁹ This device is not unlike the way that Brecht divides his symbolic mother figures from actual biological motherhood and shows biological ties as dangerous to socialist community.

²³⁰ In the literary text Rita is present during the young men's conversation, interpreting it in retrospect, and Meternagel tells her his life story at a much later point in the action. Similarly, Manfred's speech is a composite of passages taken from various points of the literary text. Their concentration in one sequence serves to underline his oppositional status and heightens the drama of this episode.

untiring agents of socialist production, and Rita functions as an icon of the humanised future that the men are striving to realise. Earlier in the film, Manfred's friend Martin links the West with a ruthless efficiency that is simultaneously associated with the Nazi era, and, as I have shown in section two, the West is also spatially associated with a soulless modernity.²³¹ Here while Manfred heaps scorn on the rate of scientific development in the East, arguing that socialism is doomed to failure because people are too spoiled by individualism and civilisation, Meternagel and Wendland are largely preoccupied with their work testing the new carriage. Neither of the socialists appears daunted by the young scientist's pessimism or the technical defect discovered during the test. The news they receive of the Soviet cosmonaut Gagarin's entry into space establishes a link between this ground-breaking achievement and their everyday struggles, serving as a symbol of what socialism can achieve. The link between their efforts and this feat, as Feinstein notes, is filmically underlined by the intercutting of stills of Soviet ground controllers with shots of Manfred, Rita and Wendland.²³² Although the episode is accompanied by an expression of hesitance by Rita about the future, who is heard in sound off asking: 'Wird unser bißchen Menschenwärme der Kälte des Kosmos standhalten?', it is followed by a long take of Rita outlined against an electric pylon, a symbolic image that couples signifiers of technological advance and humanity, providing us with a reassuring visual answer to her question. Thus, this sequence, too, serves to distinguish between the future of the GDR and that of the Federal Republic via this allocation of gender roles.

²³¹ Martin underscores his argument by alluding to *IG Farben*, a firm notorious for its use of forced labour under the Hitler regime. This allusion also reinforces a link between Nazism and monopoly capitalism characteristic of GDR interpretations of the origins of the movement.

²³² Feinstein, p. 177.

Up to now my analysis in this section has focused upon how notions of the past are articulated by the characters within the narrative past. I have characterised Rita as a figure whose past life is largely omitted. Yet these images are intended to represent her memories, and the narrative present is intended to represent Rita's coming to terms with what has happened over the last year or more.²³³ At the same time her collapse is metaphorically linked to the final division of Germany and her recovery is intended to denote a national new beginning. In Konrad Wolf's film there is something of a shift from subjective to collective concerns, and more weight is placed upon Rita's nationally and socially symbolic role. This means that the film constructs a rather different relationship between the female figure and history than Christa Wolf's novel.

Rita's response to the past is, as I have outlined in section one, almost wholly emotional. In the filmic adaptation she is demoted from a thinking subject reflecting upon her past, and instead, attention is shifted to her face that serves as a mirror apt to reflect back at the observer a feeling of collective trauma. The title sequence, for instance, shows her tear-streaked face moving from right to left across the screen.²³⁴ It is partly illuminated, but the background is blacked out. The omission of Rita's interpreting voice in the narrative present means that her presence largely serves to bring the story closer to us on an affective level. Rita expresses a society's pain about the seismic events of 1961, embodying suffering rather than interpreting the past. Infrequent intercutting between the narrative present and the narrative past, the sparing use of subjective camera shots and frequent objectification of Rita in

²³³ For a discussion of the differences between the representation of time in the story and in the film, see Blunk, *Die DDR in ihren Spielfilmen*, pp. 38-43.

²³⁴ Feinstein refers to the 'fetishization of Rita's suffering' through such shots. See Feinstein, p. 183.

the flashback narrative promote this sense that Rita's past has been expropriated, and frequently the flashback scenes tend to emancipate themselves from the narrative present. The greater part of this strand of Christa Wolf's story seems to have been remodelled in Konrad Wolf's film into something potentially better suited to the purpose of collective mourning. This emphasis upon her suffering and the de-individualisation of her story thus serves a cathartic function.

Moreover, the narrative is torn between a depiction of Rita's trajectory as a process of coming to terms with the division and losses of the past, and as a kind of resurrection in which she is restored to a previous state. We continue to be reminded of the past after she has returned to Halle. In conversation with Schwarzenbach, Rita recalls her trip to West Berlin and her collapse at the factory on her return. She makes a final visit to the – now empty – flat that she shared with Manfred, and then leaves with packed bags for the flat of the *Brigadier*, who is by now terminally ill. Outside in the city, scenes from the past briefly flicker once more onto the screen – images of parts of the city that she was shown by Manfred. Shots of Rita flash up, showing her in public spaces, in the tram and on the street, her face at first looking somewhat disturbed, and then smiling beatifically. In the closing seconds her face again occupies the centre of the picture frame. Rita seems to have been regenerated into the utopian ideal of unalienated humanity, enabling her to function once more as a symbol of a better future, ostensibly creating a sense of a national new beginning.

The voice-over commentary that begins during the depiction of Rita on the streets of Halle attempts to project forward, both acknowledging but then trying to close off the suffering of the past. The narrator states:

Vielleicht wird man jetzt begreifen, daß von der Kraft ungezählter Menschen das Schicksal der Nachgeborenen abhängt in jedem einzelnen Augenblick. [pause] Wir werden manchmal müde sein, manchmal zornig und böse. Aber wir haben keine Angst. Das wiegt alles auf: Daß wir uns gewöhnen, ruhig zu schlafen. Daß wir aus dem vollen leben, als gäbe es übergenug von diesem seltsamen Stoff Leben. Als könnte er nie zu Ende gehen.

In the voice-over, the narrator draws attention to the human effort that is essential for shaping the future, and consigns the time of crisis to the past. Yet these conflicting imperatives lead to an abrupt and rather forced ending. Given the weight of the suffering that it has shown, the film attempts to turn the corner too rapidly. The narrator's voice swells too quickly and the transition from mournful to jazzy music is too sudden. After sequences laden with pathos, this last-minute switch to an upbeat mood threatens either to fall short of its mark, or to leave the spectator feeling uneasy or cheated, for the shift allows us to glimpse the film's instrumentalization of emotion for ideological ends. The problematic ending exposes the contradictions inherent in the film's basic structure: the use of a tale of separation and individual unhappiness to reveal simultaneously the difficulty of reconciling public commitment and private fulfilment in the GDR, and to outline GDR national values, justify state socialism, and create identification with this society. Despite the forward projection of the extradiegetic narrator, there is no convincing dynamic.

This lack of forward momentum results primarily from the difficulty of identifying with Rita as a heroine with somewhere to go in the here-and-now. As I have analysed in the course of this chapter, Konrad Wolf's film erases many of the subjective elements of Rita's characterisation, emphasising her role as either suffering victim or symbol of goodness and wholeness. Even in the epilogue, again in contrast to Christa Wolf's story, the narrator excludes

concrete speculations about Rita's future, speaking only in the first person plural. In the final shots of her on the street of Halle, shallow focus shots diminish what we see of the crowd behind her and she appears once more somewhat outside social space and time. The camera pulls back at the same pace as her, reinforcing the unnaturalistic presentation of Rita. How she might act as a political subject with agency in realising the socialist utopia remains obscure.

Rita's iconic blandness threatens to undermine the narrative intention, because she does not really offer an effective counterweight to Manfred's personality. She is an image to be worshipped, not a subject but a sacred object. She comes across less as a woman than a testament to the film-maker's faith in a creed and a mirror of his desire that the world be other than it is. Thus it is easier for spectators to identify with Manfred, the man who goes to the West, rather than with Rita and the GDR. Despite the pseudo-momentum of the forward-looking commentary, a subtext threatens to emerge valorizing the creative individual, bitter because he was unable to fulfil his potential in the GDR. Looking back at the film from a post-*Wende* perspective, it is hard not to recall Manfred's sceptical remarks about the 'Sinnlose Schwierigkeiten...' of GDR production, or his question: 'Wer ... *wir*?' as the narrator begins her final, first person plural voice-over. From this retrospective position, Manfred's scepticism has, of course, gained additional persuasive force, whereas the hope and belief of Rita and the others appear painfully misguided.

Chapter Four *Denk bloß nicht ich, heule*

Introduction

With its story of the renegade teenager Peter's quest for identity, *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* throws a spotlight upon the problems facing young people growing up in the GDR.²³⁵ Asked to characterise the film in a newspaper interview in 1965, director Frank Vogel said *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* was about: 'junge Menschen in unserer Zeit'.²³⁶ In the early to mid-sixties the growing generation gap was a focus of intense political debate in the GDR. In December 1962 the first secretary of the FDJ, Horst Sindermann, criticised the party's desire to turn young people into 'Musterknaben'.²³⁷ The youth communiqué issued in 1963 reflected an attempt to address such demands. It stated that young people should not be treated like children, acknowledging that they would find a different path to socialism than the older generation, but also stressing that they should not be left to their own devices. The youth laws of May 1964 also recognised that the younger generation should have some degree of independence, although they were chiefly concerned with how to educate young people to be loyal GDR citizens.²³⁸ *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* was intended to be a very direct intervention in these discussions about young people and about GDR identity. According to the director, the film-making

²³⁵ As Barton Byg observes generational conflict was a recurring theme in GDR film. See Barton Byg, 'Generational Conflict and Historical Continuity in GDR Film', in *Framing the Past: The Historiography of German Cinema and Television*, ed. by Bruce A. Murray and Christopher J. Wickham (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp. 197-219.

²³⁶ 'Denk bloß nicht, ich heule: Junge Menschen und Problem von heute in einem neuen DEFA-Film', *Berliner Zeitung*, 31 January 1965. Unnamed author.

²³⁷ Sindermann was speaking at the Twelfth Congress of the FDJ's Central Council in December 1962. Cited by Hermann Weber, *Aufbau des Sozialismus in der DDR 1949-1961*, 2nd rev. edn (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1993), p. 63.

²³⁸ Weber, p. 63.

team's chief aim had been to reveal why a young person like Peter could grow up in a socialist system without believing in socialism.²³⁹

The film's makers were clearly motivated by a desire for social reform. In 1965 the director said that *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* like his previous two films, *Und deine Liebe auch* and *Julia lebt*, attempted to answer the question: 'Wie entsteht ein neues sozialistisches Lebensgefühl?'²⁴⁰ But the later film, which clearly links youth dissatisfaction to the authoritarian behaviour of the older generation, is far more critical of aspects of GDR society than his others. In an interview with Christiane Mückenberger in January 1990, the scriptwriters Manfred Freitag and Joachim Nestler, who themselves were only in their twenties when they scripted the film, said that they had wanted to create a film that was concerned with the development of the GDR and its contradictions.²⁴¹ Freitag said that they were motivated by a feeling that things in the GDR had to change and had a strong affinity with the figure of the dropout who takes on society. In part, the scriptwriters' depiction of dogmatism in the classroom was based upon experiences from their own schooldays, but they also augmented their own first-hand knowledge with interviews with schoolchildren, apprentices and workers, as well as insights gathered during visits to a youth detention centre.²⁴² Although they were already in the middle of writing the script when the 1963 youth communiqué, entitled 'Der Jugend Vertrauen und Verantwortung', was released, Nestler said

²³⁹ 'Denk bloß nicht, ich heule: Junge Menschen und Problem von heute in einem neuen DEFA-Film', *Berliner Zeitung*, 31 January 1965. Unnamed author.

²⁴⁰ See *ibid.* *Und deine Liebe auch* was produced in 1962 and *Julia lebt* in the following year.

²⁴¹ *Prädikat besonders schädlich*, ed. by Christiane Mückenberger (Berlin: Henschel, 1990), p. 324.

²⁴² Erika Richter, 'Zwischen Mauerbau und Kahlschlag: 1961 bis 1965', in *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA-Spielfilme 1946-92*, ed. by Ralf Schenk (Berlin: Henschel, 1994), pp. 159-212 (p. 200).

its release had given them the impression that there were people in the SED's *Zentralkomitee* who shared their view of reality.²⁴³

The film was finished in early 1965 just as the political tide was once more beginning to turn. In response to the changing circumstances, the DEFA studio management attempted to garner support among young people for the film by arranging a test showing to an audience in Demmin in March 1965. Positive responses from these teenagers, who were heavily outnumbered in the audience by SED officials and schoolteachers, and from young FDJ film club members in April 1965 could not, however, persuade either the FDJ Central Executive or the Youth Commission to intercede on the film's behalf. Kurt Turba, who was head of the Youth Commission, told the film-makers:

Dies ist ein Kollektiv, das Filme machen kann. Aber wir haben im Zentralkomitee derartige Schwierigkeiten mit unserem Jugendkommuniqué, mit der Durchsetzung unserer Jugendpolitik, wenn wir uns jetzt noch vor diesen Film stellen, sind wir erledigt. Ihr überschätzt das Niveau der mittleren Funktionäre, ihr unterschätzt ihre Macht.²⁴⁴

Denk bloß nicht, ich heule was never premiered. Instead, after almost a year of cuts and re-shoots it was attacked, by Politburo member Erich Honecker at the Eleventh Plenum in December 1965, for revealing tendencies and views that were damaging to socialism, and denounced by Horst Schumann, first secretary of the FDJ and *Zentralkomitee* member, as being 'ein Film gegen uns, gegen unsere Partei, gegen unsere Republik und gegen unsere Jugend'.²⁴⁵ These responses sealed the film's fate, and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* did not receive

²⁴³ See interview with Nestler in Mückenberger, 'Gespräch', p. 325.

²⁴⁴ Cited by Richter, 'Zwischen Mauerbau', p. 200.

²⁴⁵ See Richter, 'Zwischen Mauerbau', pp. 159-211 (p. 195 and pp. 200-201).

its first proper public screening until 1990 after having been painstakingly reconstructed by cameraman Günter Ost.²⁴⁶

Unlike *Spur der Steine*, the film has had little public impact. It has also received little academic attention, often only earning a line or two in academic accounts of the Eleventh Plenum and its effects upon GDR film-making.²⁴⁷ Heinz Kersten, who must have only known the film from hearsay, describes it as an attack on hypocrisy in the classroom in his 1977 account of trends in GDR film.²⁴⁸ Wolfgang Gersch describes the film as the ‘provozierende Sinnsuche eines Schülers’ but criticises it as being ‘dramaturgisch rissig’.²⁴⁹ Erika Richter also makes measured criticism of the film, commenting that it has something rather theoretical or cerebral about it, and adding: ‘Aus dem Abstand von 25 Jahren spürt man, daß [...] er weniger aus dem künstlerischen Einfall als dem dringenden politischen Bedürfnis, der Gesellschaft eine scharfe Kritik entgegenzuschleudern, entstanden ist.’²⁵⁰ Christiane Mückenberger passes no judgement on the artistic merit of *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, but, as I mention in the introduction to my thesis, highlights its taboo-breaking approach to anti-fascism. Certainly its popularity among its young test audiences, and the absolute ban which it attracted suggest that it catches something of the core tensions in GDR society at that time.

²⁴⁶ For Ost’s account of the process, see Bion Steinborn and Christine von Eichel-Streiber. ‘Verbotene Filme: Ein Vierteljahrhundert in Zensur versunkene Filmkunst: *Filmfaust-Gespräche mit DDR-Filmemachern: Kurt Maetzig, Werner [sic] Ost, Günter Stahnke*’, *Filmfaust*, May-June (1990), 18-43 (p. 31).

²⁴⁷ The only more substantial analysis of the film that I have encountered is an article by Andrea Lutz, “‘Ich will Anne!’” Zum Phänomen “Liebe” in Frank Vogels: *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* (DDR, 1965)’, *Der DEFA-Film Erbe oder Episode?: Augen-Blick 14* (Marburg: Schüren-Presse, 1993), pp. 9-24.

²⁴⁸ Heinz Kersten, ‘Entwicklungslinien’, in *Film in der DDR*, ed. by Peter W. Jansen and Wolfram Schütte (Munich: Hanser, 1977), pp. 7-56 (p. 43).

²⁴⁹ Wolfgang Gersch, ‘Film in der DDR: Die verlorene Alternative’, in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, ed. by Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), pp. 323-364 (p. 344).

²⁵⁰ Richter, ‘Zwischen’, p. 201.

While acknowledging the film's flaws, Freitag has emphasised its experimental character, saying *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* was an attempt to develop a new kind of story-telling and a new approach to reality. Speaking in an interview after the Wende, he said: 'Der Film bedeutete den Abschied von einer ganz bestimmten Methode, eine Geschichte zu entwickeln. Wir kamen mehr zu einer naiven Realitätsbetrachtung, es ging uns dann eher darum, aus der Realität ein Sinnbild zu formen.'²⁵¹ The restricted range of characters and action, the articulation of social tensions via figural conflicts, the use of exaggerated gestures and music to convey dramatic tension, and the heightened significance of the film's *mise-en-scène*, including its use of nationally symbolic places, reveal a stylistic proximity to melodrama. For Thomas Elsaesser the personalising of social conflict is one of the mode's key features and, writing of Hollywood cinema of the 1940s and 1950s in particular, he links the persistence of the melodramatic genre to popular culture's refusal 'to understand social change in other than private contexts and emotional terms'.²⁵² In addition, he has pointed out melodrama's recurring tendency to interpret metaphorically social conflict in terms of sexual exploitation and rape, tracing this back to the German bourgeois tragedies of Lessing and Schiller, to English eighteenth-century sentimental literature and to post-Revolution French drama. I shall argue that like *Der geteilte Himmel* the triangular father-daughter-lover constellation in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* evokes Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe* and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, and that the film at times similarly conflates sexual and social conflict.

²⁵¹ See Mückenberger, 'Gespräch', pp. 328-329.

²⁵² Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama' in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: BFI, 1987), pp. 43-69 (p. 47). Originally published in *Monogram*, 4 (1972), 2-15.

Unlike Hollywood melodrama, *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* does not, however, in any way downplay the public connotations of this private story. The characters have representative professional functions, as well as paradigmatic historical narratives. Furthermore the film's location in and around Weimar, a city with great resonance in German history, and its intertextual allusions to key texts and figures from German cultural history underline the film's engagement with issues concerning the GDR's cultural and national identity. In summing up his critique of the film, Nestler said he felt it was 'zu rhetorisch, zu "sehr Schiller"'. From his words it is not clear whether he is simply referring to the film's general declamatory pathos, or if Schiller had a more concrete influence upon *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*; Peter's involvement in the attack upon his former headteacher is certainly reminiscent of *Die Räuber* in which radical idealism gets tarnished by being caught up in violence. The rebellious outsider figure of Peter also has certain affinities with Goethe's Werther, and one point in this chapter will be to examine the role of such allusions. *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* is an interesting attempt, despite its faults, to use family melodrama to highlight the threats posed by generational conflicts to the survival of the GDR as a functioning society and to seriously engage with issues of national identity.

In its emphasis upon the family *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* reveals certain continuities with the previous two films that I have analysed. In *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, as I have shown, family structures are regenerated and conservative gender values established, while the orphan Dieter's gaining of a symbolic father figure representing the state brings narrative resolution. In *Der geteilte Himmel* identification is shifted away from the family to the collective, but Rita's ties to the new state are, as I have argued, expressed in the form of a

father-daughter relationship. In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* the plot paradigm is based upon what Lynda E. Boose, in her wide-ranging study of texts from Western culture, calls ‘the authorized structure of patriarchy’ which expects the threat of insurrection from the son, but obedience from the daughter.²⁵³ The challenge to the status quo is figured primarily in terms of the younger male’s challenge to older male authority figures. The triangular configuration of father-daughter-lover is used to articulate, on the one hand, the threat from disaffected youth and, on the other, the danger of social conservatism. Anne’s patient, accepting love for Peter is the means by which he is integrated into the socialist state. Yet while Peter’s integration into Anne’s family, which in some senses stands for the GDR, is aimed at achieving narrative resolution and symbolising his social integration, this film calls into question its own ‘happy’ ending far more than the other two. The degree of change that has been negotiated is very much open to question. As Lutz points out, the social contradictions that have been uncovered in the course of the narrative still remain.²⁵⁴ We are forced to ask to what extent Peter’s feelings for Anne really represent an acceptance of the state – despite the metaphorical blurring between Anne’s love and the love of the nation in the narrative.

In the first section, I shall focus primarily on the emphasis upon father figures and masculinity before turning to examine in more detail the use of the father-daughter-lover plot to encode national belonging and identity. In the second section, my analysis will centre upon the use of the spatial opposition between city and country to explore issues about disorder and order, freedom

²⁵³ Lynda E. Boose, ‘The Father’s House and the Daughter in it: The Structures of Western Culture’s Daughter-Father Relationship’, in *Daughters and Fathers*, ed. by Lynda E. Boose and Betty S. Flowers (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 19-74 (p. 34).

²⁵⁴ Lutz, p 23.

and community, modernity and tradition, and the distinctions between West and East Germany. A key theme here and in the following section will be a tension between erotic fulfilment and the social order: the twin threats of unbounded desires, which might lead the socialist subject away from the necessary path of duty and concern for others, and of repressive authoritarianism, which might elicit the very rebellious desires that it seeks to control. The eroticised city is historically associated with modernity and consumerism and thus tends to be coded negatively in GDR culture. Yet although the film has recourse to a pastoral idiom, it queries the simple repression or rejection of modernity and the freedoms offered by urban life. Finally, I shall examine how symbolic spaces, primarily Buchenwald and the Goethehaus, are used to engage with German history and with GDR national identity. The film both revivifies the GDR's legitimising anti-fascist narrative and warns of the dangers of a re-emergence of fascism, as well as presenting a rather less constraining model from the national past with its evocation of a sexualised and cosmopolitan Goethe. It thereby constructs models of historical and social identity that stand in tension with one another, but manages this dichotomy through gender difference, representing Anne in the Buchenwald sequences as a mediator of the anti-fascist narrative and an embodiment of the selfless love of the nation, while identifying Peter with a more self-fulfilling, individualistic mode of being.

Dealing with Difference

In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* there are three father figures, but only one mother. Single fathers are not infrequent in DEFA films of the 1950s and

1960s, neither is the constellation of lone father and only daughter, repeated here twice, unusual.²⁵⁵ Given the huge number of male casualties in the war, however, this predominance of older men does not reflect any social reality. So why such emphasis upon fathers? As in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* and *Der geteilte Himmel*, older male characters are seen as vital in determining the character of the nation. In Vogel's film, each of the three father figures, Peter's father Naumann, head teacher Röhle, and Anne's father Paul, represent a particular approach to life and society encapsulated by their respective catchphrases: 'Leben', 'Disziplin' and 'Kämpfen', and offer the young protagonist, Peter, different models of masculinity. Like the figure of Manfred in *Der geteilte Himmel*, Peter is a questioning spirit. The force of his challenge to GDR authority possesses both destructive and reinvigorating potential.

The central triangular constellation of Paul – Anne – Peter provides the dramatic momentum of the film. Boose draws attention to the curious ambivalence of the father-daughter relationship, noting that while the father can expect the most unquestioning obedience from the daughter, she seems at the same time to be the family member who is most able to wound him, and whose loss he must accept if societal reproduction is to go on. Drawing on Victor Turner's account of liminal personae for her analysis, Boose says that daughters are such liminal characters and that such characters 'seem both dangerous and indispensable to the community because they embody its potential for something other than "the normative system of bounded, structured, particularistic groups"'.²⁵⁶ The father – daughter – lover constellation in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* offers a rather ambiguous structure

²⁵⁵ For example: *Wo der Zug nicht lange hält*, director Joachim Hasler, 1960; *Zu jeder Stunde*, director Heinz Thiel, 1960, *Das zweite Gleis*, director Joachim Kunert, 1962, *Ach, du fröhliche*, director Günter Reisch, 1962.

²⁵⁶ Boose, p. 67.

for articulating, on the one hand, the dangers of overweening paternal state power and, on the other, the risk of the younger generation betraying the 'revolution', while at the same time underlining the need for social renewal of some kind. In the end Peter finds a place in GDR society via his relationship with Anne and her father. However, the ending is uneasy, promising at the most the prospect of modest social revision within the existing framework of paternal power. Before looking at the specifics of the father – daughter – son dynamic, I would first like to analyse the character of the young rebel, his potential father figures, and the two young female protagonists.

Peter is the most fluid figure in the film, and is a concatenation of various literary and filmic types. He is the *Bildungsroman* hero who has embarked upon a quest for identity and who wishes to find a place in society. He is the destructive young 'Halbstarke', and the fool who punctures hypocrisy with his laughter and impersonations. Anne's father perceives him as the 'alien' seducer who is linked with the West. Such assorted masks and mix of functions places Peter in company with Bakhtin's rogue, fool and clown. As Bakhtin writes:

Essential to these three figures is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege – the right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available; none of these categories quite suits them, they see the underside and the falseness of every situation. Therefore, they can exploit any position they choose, but only as a mask. The rogue still has some ties that bind him to real life; the clown and the fool, however, are 'not of this world,' and therefore possess their own special rights and privileges. These figures are laughed at by others, and *themselves* as well. Their laughter bears the stamp of the public square where the folk gather. They re-establish the public nature of the human figure [...].²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics' [1937-38] in M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael

Especially once Peter has left the family household and become a displaced, wandering figure, he takes on something of the functions which Bakhtin attributes to his three types, so that the issue of whether the GDR can integrate such a figure becomes also the question of the status of the GDR as a public place, a polity.

The young protagonist's quest for identity is motivated through the narrative by his familial circumstances, as well as his youth, and the repressiveness of the social situation, and constitutes an attempt to redefine masculinity. In the film's first half the young male protagonist is clearly in part trying to live out a degraded model of male identity embodied by his foster father, and he rebels against the values embodied by his head teacher Röhle, who is mentioned in the first half, but whom we do not actually see until the second. However, his discovery of his adoption certificate and his mother's admission that she discovered him as a baby in a bombed-out ruin breaks his ties with his dead foster father.²⁵⁸ As with Dieter in *Berlin -- Ecke Schönhauser* and even Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel* there is a link between Peter's orphan status and his eventual social integration, and hence his status as symbolising forwards movement. In the second part of the film he is confronted with a third image of masculinity, Anne's father, and challenges his authority, too. None of the three older men can simply serve as a model for Peter, for each one has flaws and all have been negatively affected in one way or another by their experiences of the Nazi past. It is Peter's encounters with Anne and Uschi that offer him more productive pointers about how to become a man. Nevertheless,

Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin and London: University of Texas, 1981), pp. 84-258 (pp. 159-160).

²⁵⁸ In contrast, one of the early female outsider figures in DEFA film, the orphan Traudel in the comedy *Vergeßt mir meine Traudel nicht*, must establish her biological parentage, crucially the identity of her father, before she can marry and integrate into society.

Peter's uneasy integration, at the end of the film, into a household and community headed by Anne's father, leave it rather unclear what kind of new masculinity Peter will be able to embody henceforth.

Each of the father figures represents extremes of sexual behaviour. Whereas Paul and Röhle are clean-living single men, who appear to have no sexual relations, Peter's father, Naumann, whose catchphrase is 'Leben', is a hard-drinking womaniser. A former Communist party member who left the party in 1933 upon Hitler's accession to power and a black marketeer in the post-war years, Naumann is marked out as a negative character both by his personal history and by his life of non-productive excess. He is contemptuous of Röhle, the 'Genossen Besserwisser', and the whole socialist project, which he depicts as life-denying. At the very start of the film, Peter's father collapses and dies as he indulges his vices, but his last bequest to his son is a heap of money and the advice that Peter should go out and live life to the full. After his death, Peter finds a pile of photos of the married women with whom his father has slept and their cuckolded husbands. Though on one level clearly the anti-hero of the film, the film leads us to pity Naumann because of his past rather than to despise him, and he does not merely represent a negative force in the economy of the narrative, since he embodies a notion of individual fulfilment, extreme and hypermasculine as it is.

Naumann's opposition to those whom he calls the doers, the 'Macher', appears to derive not from an innate aversion to work, but from his disappointment with a life of toil that has had few rewards. Moreover, the dialogue hints that training for a more fulfilling career as an engineer may have been thwarted because of a period of past unemployment. Peter's adoptive father also appears to be, like the other fathers, scarred by history. His plaintive

response to his wife's reproach about his lack of political fortitude during the Nazi regime may not reveal a noble nature, but it does reveal a human one. He answers: 'Aber Mutter, ich wollte nicht im KZ krepieren... Was hatten wir denn bloß schon vom Leben?'²⁵⁹ Andrea Lutz argues that his reaction reveals that he is still traumatised by memories of the past, and provides a psychological explanation for his behaviour as a type of coping mechanism.²⁶⁰ More importantly, as the only sexualised father, Naumann introduces the theme of pleasure and libertinism versus work and duty that will be elaborated in different ways in the course of the film.

Viewers are, however, unlikely to regard the head teacher Röhle, the absolute antithesis of Peter's father, as a wholly or even mainly positive character. *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* is clearly critical of the type of social authority that he embodies. The head teacher's meticulously tidy desk, which Peter demonstratively messes up when he invades his office, Röhle's pedantic straightening-up of the portrait of Lenin hanging in his office, and his mannered, predictable responses comically reveal his overt concern for order and rigidity. His tendency to recite the same phrases and questions makes him a cipher for social stasis. His catchword, 'Disziplin', is repeatedly echoed by the teacher and by other characters, encouraging us to question the value and the meaning of this principle. The lecturer at the planetarium seems to advocate a rather different type of discipline than that practised by Röhle. He clearly demarcates it from unthinking subordination, linking the concept to hard work and unswerving honesty with oneself and society as a whole – principles that are more closely associated with Paul's father and Peter.

²⁵⁹ All transcriptions from the film are my own, unless otherwise annotated.

²⁶⁰ Lutz, p. 15.

Although the film exploits the comic potential of the headmaster, mocking his hypercorrect ways, it also clearly shows that Röhle's intolerance of any kind of dissent or any manifestations of difference breeds antagonism and violent opposition in Peter. Called upon to write an essay that asserts 'Die Republik braucht dich, du brauchst die Republik', the young rebel simply denies his need for the state, leading to Röhle's expelling him from school. Instead of engaging in debate, the head master simply concludes: 'Wer braucht die Republik nicht, den braucht auch die Republik nicht.'²⁶¹ The episode, a clear allusion to the official state slogan 'Die Republik braucht alle, alle brauchen die Republik', calls into question the effectiveness of such state rhetoric in truly promoting conciliation between old and young, or a sense of belonging among the disaffected.²⁶² The headmaster's thinking is shown to be caught up in the friend/foe mentality that marked the SED regime throughout its forty years of existence. Despite his efforts to prove himself Peter is unable to persuade Röhle to take him back into the school. As a result of their special civil servant status schoolteachers in Germany have long been closely associated with state authority. The portrayal of Röhle is reminiscent of satirical portraits of teachers in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century German literature, such as Heinrich Mann's Professor Unrat.²⁶³

The head teacher's past provides an explanation for his overzealousness. His perception of any form of dissent as a threat to the socialist system is shown to spring from his deep-seated fears about a return to Nazism. On the one hand, the dialogue between Peter and Röhle, in the half-built Nazi parade hall, makes explicit the authoritarian potential of the GDR's

²⁶¹ Peter cites Röhle's words in a conversation with the school secretary.

²⁶² The slogan appears in *Neues Deutschland*, 2 November 1963. Cited by Weber, p. 63.

²⁶³ Mann's novel of the same name was also adapted for film. *Der blaue Engel* was directed by Josef von Sternberg and produced in 1930.

anti-fascist narrative, showing the way that it could become – unwittingly or not – a tool for constraining the young. On the other hand, it provides some defence of Röhle by revealing the truly sadistic nature of Peter’s companions. As the teacher attempts to walk away from the hoodlums, one of whom is threatening to burn his feet with a cigarette end, he is pushed sprawling to the floor. The moments in which we see him stretched full length, his glasses lying in front of him on the floor and then slowly gathering himself and putting his glasses back on invest this figure with pathos. Röhle’s age and his vulnerability are emphasised. Alone with Peter, he wonders what could have inspired such behaviour and his *sotto voce* tone serves to further heighten the pathos. And yet, as he asks incredulously, ‘Wo hast du das gelernt ... bei *mir*?’ there is no sense that he has come any closer to understanding his own mistakes or to understanding Peter. Moreover, a sickening ambivalence creeps into Röhle’s words, as he claims the right for himself and the Party to determine Peter’s life because they alone have had first-hand experience of Nazi Germany. Röhle’s description of the type of obedience demanded of him in his youth sounds uncannily similar to the behaviour that he demands of Peter, implicitly raising the question about how far he has really distanced himself from thought structures inculcated in his childhood and youth in the Third Reich. As Lutz notes: ‘Auch das engstirnige und starre Klammern von Röhle an der parteipolitischen Doktrin hat eine Wurzel in persönlichen Erfahrungen mit dem Faschismus. “Ich war 25 Jahre alt, da habe ich zum ersten Mal das Wort Menschlichkeit gehört ...”’²⁶⁴ The film signals the danger that authoritarianism can, paradoxically, be bred by a traumatised desire to stop the Nazi past repeating itself.

²⁶⁴ Lutz, p. 15.

In contrast to Naumann, the third man of the fathers' generation, Paul, lives a life characterised by restraint, though his penchant for confectionery, if not for champagne, adds a human dimension to his otherwise ascetic lifestyle, and thus distances him from Röhle. As Anne tells Peter: 'Eigentlich ist mein Vater OK, selten mal ein lautes Wort. Er raucht nicht, trinkt nicht, nur heimlich verdrückt er Konfekt – Unmassen.' Paul, the chairman of the local farming collective, is quite literally a down-to-earth character. He is hard-working and impatient with what he sees as the lofty ideas and the indolence of the young men around him. As well as being a member of the SED, he was involved in the anti-fascist struggle during the Nazi regime and the war, but there are only elliptical references to this past. The fractured, fragmented nature of his recollections signals that Paul is still deeply scarred by his experiences. Anne tells Peter that her father is nicknamed 'Samthandschuh' because of his abhorrence of violence, which she only knows is somehow linked to his experiences in a concentration camp. Later confronted by Peter's defiance and non-conformity but determined not to resort to violence, Paul seethes with impotent rage and struggles to maintain his self-restraint. With Anne his daughter, he finally snaps when he thinks that she is about to abandon him.

Forced to bring up Anne alone, Paul has attempted to be both mother and father to her. His treatment of his daughter resembles in its maternal/paternal aspect the care that the police officer extends to Angela in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* and Meternagel shows to Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel*. His nurturing role, his nickname and his fondness for confectionery, traditionally more a trait usually attributed to women, also give him a certain feminine aspect. Yet Paul's concern also to play the more traditionally masculine role of protector towards his daughter causes him to be harsh in his

behaviour towards Peter. The death of Anne's mother offers a psychological explanation for the father's potentially stifling overprotectiveness towards his daughter. The fact that he has no wife magnifies the potential personal loss should his daughter leave him for another man. Furthermore, his wife's fate also arouses his fear that Anne could be similarly vulnerable to abuse. These anxieties make it difficult for him to extend the understanding and the warmth demanded of him by the Party with its slogan: 'Herz und Hand der Jugend'.²⁶⁵ He is torn between the urge to exclude – on several occasions he tells Peter to leave the area or contemplates throwing him off the collective's land – and a sense of obligation to the ostensibly inclusive party line. Unlike Röhle, he does not simply write Peter off, and this validates him as a character, but his experiences of the Nazi past make him overly suspicious of the young protagonist.

Moreover, Paul's guiding principle 'Kämpfen' is as subject to scrutiny as Röhle's catchphrase 'Disziplin' and Naumann's motto 'Leben'. For Paul it appears to signify the application of sustained effort, the kind of effort that he believes the young generation is unwilling to invest to reach a goal, but it is also resonant with the echoes of class and anti-fascist struggle. When Anne, perturbed by Peter's lack of feelings for her, seeks advice from her father for a 'friend' whose love is unrequited, Paul's response is: 'Sie soll kämpfen!' With its aggressive undertones, her father's approach to life cannot, as Anne suggests, serve as a model for interpersonal relationships in modern GDR society. She replies: '[F]rüher hattet ihr einen Gegner vor euch. Aber jetzt ... jetzt ist es vielleicht schwerer. Jetzt ist der Gegner in uns, in dem oder dem.'

²⁶⁵ Paul's words echo the title of the Politburo directive of January 1956: 'Der Jugend unser Herz und unsere Hilfe: Über die Verantwortung und die Aufgaben der Partei bei der sozialistischen Erziehung der gesamten Jugend der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik'.

[...] Man findet sich schwer zurecht, weil der, in dem der Gegner steckt, auch wiederum kein Gegner ist.' Anne's response casts doubt upon Paul's attitude to life. His advice to Peter to fight to win back a place at school is also shown to be inappropriate, for the head teacher simply turns Peter down, telling him: 'Doch mit uns kann man kämpfen und zwar gemeinsam. Aber gegen uns...?' Peter's experience with Röhle makes clear that Paul's philosophy can be dangerously polarising.

The daughter figures are, as Lutz notes, important in terms of their intermediary relationships with their fathers and with the young male rebel. She writes: 'In ihren Beziehungen zu Peter repräsentieren sie ihre Väter und Peter setzt sich in seiner Beziehung zu ihnen mit seinem Verhältnis zu den Vätern auseinander.'²⁶⁶ Her analysis is, however, rather reductive. While Anne, like Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel* and Kati in *Spur der Steine*, does play the role of mediator in a male power struggle, she also embodies the values of love and understanding that the older male figures lack. And Uschi Röhle is definitely more of her own woman than Lutz's analysis concedes. While the social influence that Anne exerts in the film involves her largely playing a traditionally feminine role, the more emancipated Uschi articulates the desire for men to evince a more independent masculinity and for a more mutually-satisfying relationship between the sexes. As well as being associated with different types of male-female relationships, both daughters in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* also have a contrasting relationship to the past.

In her conversation with Peter, Uschi communicates and by implication advocates a quite different paradigm of masculinity than her father does. She has a passionately romantic streak, and measures modern day men against a

²⁶⁶ Lutz, p. 12.

romantic nineteenth century masculine ideal, Évariste Galois. He lived from 1811 to 1832, and is a key figure in the history of mathematics – Galois theory is a central field in modern algebra. A committed Republican, Galois was arrested on 14 July 1831 for engaging in Republican demonstrations after the July Revolution. He was paroled in 1832 but then killed in a duel which may have been trumped up by his political opponents to eliminate him, but may genuinely have been over a woman.²⁶⁷ Galois, who was at odds with both the educational and political establishment, is someone who was unable to find an arena for his politics or his intellectual skills. In comparison with her ideal, Uschi finds that young men in the GDR are either cowards or ‘Halbstarke’. Such an allusion has a similar function to the reference to Stendhal’s Julien Sorel in *Der geteilte Himmel* in evoking anti-authoritarian models from an earlier age.

Uschi’s criticism of modern-day young men can be read as an insinuation that the dominance of paternal authority in the GDR is creating hoodlums or yes-men. Yet Uschi does not directly criticise her father’s treatment of Peter, and her refusal to give him a second chance also seems to mirror his unrelenting stance towards the young man. However, Uschi rejects Peter for different reasons than her father. She realises that he used her as a pawn in a male power game in their first relationship, and now suspects that he wishes to form a relationship with her either to get back at her father, or because he wants her to function as an intermediary between the two men. Firstly, Uschi clearly wants to be loved as an individual and not regarded as an extension of her father, and secondly, Uschi believes that Peter should be man enough to face up to her father on his own. Although Galois is a figure from a

²⁶⁷ See Ian Stewart, *Galois Theory*, 2nd edn (London: Chapman & Hall, 1989), pp xvii – xxiv.

different age who is too heroic and tragic to be a suitable role model for Peter, Uschi's comments do seem to serve as a catalyst in changing Peter's behaviour.

Uschi declares herself unwilling to mother Peter, telling him: 'Hänge dich nicht an meine Rockzipfel' when he pleads that he needs her. In contrast, her father appears unwilling to allow Peter to grow up and assume responsibility. In the closing sequences Peter tells him 'Ich lasse mich nicht hätscheln. Ich bin kein Säugling mehr', when Röhle asserts that the party and the Republic have to assume responsibility for the younger generation because of their inexperience. This is the complaint about 'Gängelei' that would sound all the way through to the demise of the GDR. It is at this stage, too, that Peter finally gives up on the idea of a relationship with Uschi, informing her father: 'das mit den Rockzipfeln hat sich erledigt und das andere auch'. Here the film seems somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, this step would seem to indicate that Peter has matured in the course of the narrative, but on the other, the ending that involves Peter's moving into Anne's father's home, as I shall show, contradicts any sense of adult independence. Given her dissatisfaction with the state of modern manhood and her dreams and longings, the physics student Uschi appears to be a prototype of another character played by Jutta Hoffmann, Margit, the mathematician, in *Der Dritte*.²⁶⁸ However, while Margit is the central protagonist in Egon Günther's 1972 production, Uschi only plays a minor role. It is a sign of the film's reliance on an ultimately patriarchal structure that Peter should choose the daughterly, schoolgirl Anne over the doctoral student Uschi, who seems to embody the virilised modern woman, with her gamine haircut and her stylish, sexy safari suit.

²⁶⁸ *Der Dritte*, director Egon Günther, 1972.

By comparison with Uschi, Anne is a mere child whose sexual innocence is emphasised. It is with Peter that she experiences her first proper kiss. Prior to that she had only been pecked on her forehead and cheeks. In contrast, too, with the slightly older woman who envisages a partnership based on give and take, Anne shows an almost self-abnegating readiness to help the young protagonist, despite his rejecting her on several occasions. She is attracted above all to Peter's abhorrence of hypocrisy. The young woman is associated with a certain utopian potential through her love for literature, her poetry and her imaginative powers. Almost unthinkingly, she lives out humanistic ideals. While Anne is willing to take the time to try to understand the rebellious teenager and can discern his potential, the male authority figures simply criticise him.

The young woman does her utmost to enable Peter to study for his exams without any institutional support, providing a place for him to learn and bringing him food, as well as spending time revising with him. She also tries to harness the youth group, the FDJ, to take up his cause at school. Anne describes her supportive role in masculine terms, telling the other group members that she is playing the role of 'Patenonkel', or godfather, to Peter. The film implies that she has taken on a social function that should perhaps be more properly fulfilled by older males. Her good and trusting nature makes her open to Peter and willing to help him, her love is eventually essential to his integration. In her analysis Lutz emphasises that 'Die Liebe Annes erscheint von gesellschaftlichen Konstellationen losgelöst', while accepting that Anne's love is functionalised dramaturgically to achieve narrative resolution and

integrate Peter into society.²⁶⁹ My analysis will show that the love/family plots are far more intertwined with issues of social and national identity than she concedes. Her analysis also plays down the role of the daughter in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* where she argues that '[es] handelt sich eigentlich um eine Männergeschichte, um die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Vater und Sohn'.²⁷⁰ This obscures the way the film utilises the traditional role of the daughter, within its dramatic economy, to mediate between the older and younger male figures. In the Western tradition the father-daughter-lover paradigm offers a potentially more differentiated, but also in this case less conclusive, way to explore social contradictions and issues of social change than an unmediated father-son conflict.

Denk bloß nicht, ich heule depicts a society torn between the paralysing authoritarianism of an older generation plagued by fear about the future of the socialist project and a repetition of the Nazi past, as well as implicit concern about losing power, and a discontented, disorientated younger generation desirous of greater freedoms and social change. Though all the film's characters clearly have representative functions within this social narrative, its core national narrative is expressed through the relationship of Peter – Anne – Paul. An identification, based upon the founding myth depicting the GDR as the fruit of the anti-fascist struggle, is established between Anne and the young Republic via her parents. While her father is a committed Communist, who played a role in the anti-fascist movement, her mother fell victim to the Nazis as a result of her trusting goodness. Paul, scarred by his experiences in the Third Reich, characterises his daughter as a re-embodiment of her dead mother,

²⁶⁹ Lutz, p. 23.

²⁷⁰ Lutz, p. 12.

who represents a utopian potential extinguished by the Nazi regime. Peter is depicted both as a potential source of renewal and as a potential danger. His forthright and courageous attacks on a social consensus based on hypocrisy are depicted positively, but his association with a band of thugs and with the West, through his use of American slang and predilection for Western goods, pose a threat. Peter's final acceptance into the family symbolises his integration into a socialist order based upon an anti-fascist tradition, but, as I have mentioned above, the film's ending seems to offer little real prospect of change.

This triangular relationship is the source of considerable tension. Although Paul does not appear until the second half of the film, it quickly becomes apparent that his opposition to his daughter's relationship with Peter will provide the dramatic motor of the rest of the film. At the beginning of the sequence, framed in long shot against the background of an old barn, he walks steadily towards the camera, moving out of the sunlight and into the shadows, until he stands partly silhouetted, hands on hips, dominating the centre of the frame. In the next cut we see frontal shots of Anne and Peter framed from a camera perspective behind Paul's back. His opposition to their relationship is expressed through the triangular composition which situates his daughter on one side and Peter on the other. Anne is characterised as an affectionate, dutiful daughter who is torn between her love for her father and her love for Peter. In this first confrontation Anne is pictured standing with her eyes and head cast down awkwardly, while Peter nonchalantly leans on the ploughshare with his jacket slung casually over his shoulder and faces her hostile father. Father-daughter relationships are, as Boose observes, typically characterised and spatialised by the conflict between retention and separation, and after this first

confrontation in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* we see Anne pulled back and forward between her father and Peter in a series of episodes.²⁷¹

A key sequence in the development of the relationship between father, daughter and lover comes in the sheep shed sequence in which Anne and Peter seem about to run away together. After Peter's drunken confrontation with Anne's father, any chance of reconciliation between the two men seems illusory, and the young woman seems to be faced, like Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel*, with an either/or decision. This choice is expressed symbolically in her agreement to put on a black dress Peter has bought for her. The figure-accentuating dress with its cut-out back is resonant with metaphoric meaning. Bought with West German marks from the *Exquisit* shop in Weimar, it is like the sexy, modern evening wear that the women wear in the bars and clubs of Peter's Westernised Weimar. It functions as a cipher for sexuality, modernity and cultural imperialism from the West. For Anne with her childish plaited bunches and her schoolgirl figure, the dress is clearly unsuitable, even alien. It even seems to threaten her purity. The staging of this sequence within the shepherd's hut reinforces the connotations of the dress as something which is inauthentic and 'out of place'. By forcing Anne to put it on Peter is depicted as trying to remake Anne in the image of a city vamp, or in the image of the fashion model in the magazine pinned to the wall, and to claim her as his own.

The melodramatic heightening of the sequence emphasises its significance. Anne's assent to put on the dress is depicted in a way that, at first, seems tantamount to a betrayal of both her father and her country. There is a long close-up of her tear-streaked face as she stands staring strangely ahead. He lifts the boxed dress beseechingly up towards her. Torn between her desire

²⁷¹ Boose, p. 32.

for Peter and her sense of duty towards her father, she begins crying, but then goes off screen and changes into the dress that she rejected in the first half of the film. Wearing it, she assents mechanically to what Peter is proposing they include in – what appears to be – a letter explaining their elopement to her father and which, in effect, adds up to a recanting of all that Anne's father represents, but also a negation of what she is and what she believes in. The images convey notions of invasive male sexuality and passive vulnerable femininity, as well as encoding a national narrative of a young state threatened by the West.

The staging of this sequence in a place on the periphery, a barn once belonging to the feudal estate on the edge of the land belonging to the *Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft* (LPG), seems to hark back to the sexual politics and moral geography of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*.²⁷² In such texts, the daughter is a signifier of the father's power, and the danger of the daughter's seduction is the ultimate threat that can be posed to his power and honour. Often the seducer or lover and the act of seduction tend to be associated with places distanced from established patriarchal authority or with those of temporary residence, such as those of an aristocratic *Lustschloss*, or here a bucolic shed. The sturdy, proud, rough-hewn father echoes Luise's father in *Kabale und Liebe* whereas Anne's fear at the beginning of this scene evokes Emilia's fear that she might succumb to seduction. Only when Anne's father steps in and slaps her does she come to her [sic] senses, but his act of violence also reveals his jealous possessiveness of Anne. On the one hand, the sequence shows clearly the dangers such disaffected young men can represent

²⁷² See Ingrid Walsøe-Engel, *Fathers and Daughters: Patterns of Seduction in Tragedies by Gryphius, Lessing, Hebbel and Kroetz* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993), p. 7.

if they are pushed out to the margins of society. On the other, it also casts paternal authority in an ambivalent light.

The sequence represents a turning point for Anne and for Paul in their relationship towards one another. The young woman temporarily rejects Peter and he cycles away, but in the end the events mark a shift away from her father and towards her lover. Anne's father, who is shocked by his violence, realises that he must become more accommodating if he is not to lose his daughter. Alone in her bedroom, he concedes that the values that Anne embodies can safely unfold in this new age, telling his absent daughter: 'Mutter, sie war zu gutherzig, zu vertrauensvoll. Die war nicht für so eine verfluchte Zeit geboren. Was Mutter nicht durfte, so darfst du sein.' Paul, like Peter, undergoes a learning process. Lutz argues that this development entails his coming to accept that life in the GDR is not quite as he imagined, for he is confronted by a younger generation that does not believe in socialism.²⁷³ But this learning process also involves his coming to realise his own contradictions and shortcomings. When, shortly afterwards in the village hall, Peter confronts Paul and expresses his desire for Anne, he begrudgingly accedes to his demand. A break with the past would seem to be in the offing.

However, the ending of *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* is ambivalent. Symbolically, Peter's alliance with Anne indicates that a certain historical continuity will be ensured, since, unlike Uschi, Anne is clearly linked to traditional GDR values, while the integration of Peter via his relationship to Anne indicates the possibility of some social change. However, the projected union between the young couple does not seem set to follow the conventional exogamous model of the daughter leaving the father's house. Instead Anne's

²⁷³ Lutz, p. 15.

father, as head of the LPG and head of the household, begrudgingly extends to Peter an invitation to stay in the community and apparently to live in his home. The divergence of the narrative from this usual paradigm relieves Anne's father of some of the pain of separation and loss of power usually attendant upon the daughter forming an alliance with another man. But for Peter, going to live in Anne's father's house rather than becoming the head of his own family as the standard Western family paradigm demands, could be interpreted as a sign of his emasculation and defeat.

The film ends with the couple seated outside in the dark, facing each other, but seated at arm's length. Peter has just denied that he is crying, and Anne has offered him a place to sleep – in the living-room. As Boa and Palfreyman note, the offer of a bed on the sofa at home hardly appears to offer 'a lasting solution ushering in an epoch of happy families'.²⁷⁴ The significance of the tears that Peter sheds at the end of the film is ambiguous. Lutz maintains that Peter does not find himself but rather resigns himself to the situation, while remaining somewhat defiant. She states: 'Ob Peter mit seiner – immer noch trotzigem – Anpassung auf Dauer schon integriert ist und glücklich werden wird, bleibt als drängende Frage bestehen. Der Film behauptet das letztlich auch nicht.'²⁷⁵ Günter Agde interprets Peter's denial of his tears as a rather more rebellious statement of intent. He writes: 'Sein trotziges, kräftiges "Denk bloß nicht, ich heule" am Ende des Films ist denn auch der sicht- und hörbare Schritt des Jungen, weiterzukämpfen, wenn nötig völlig allein und ohne die

²⁷⁴ Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 142.

²⁷⁵ Lutz, p. 23.

Alten.²⁷⁶ I find it difficult not to regard his tears as a sign of defeat. Certainly, the ending of *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* does not resolve the conflict between generations and their concepts of masculinity with anything like full closure. In the next section, I shall argue that the film also questions the suitability of the rural community as a home for the young urban rebel.

Freedom or Belonging?

The representation of space in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* is rather puzzling when viewed in the light of the GDR's dominant social ideals, revealing anti-modern tendencies that I have also detected in my analyses of *Berlin - Ecke Schönhauser* and *Der geteilte Himmel*. The main narrative trajectory involves Peter's abandonment of Weimar for the country, and the plot seems to constitute a moral geography that privileges the rural. As Boa and Palfreyman note, *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* 'has many affinities with traditional *Heimat* discourse,' seemingly producing and reproducing a nostalgic spatial ideal of the village as a model of community.²⁷⁷ This community is also closely linked symbolically with the nation because of its proximity to Buchenwald and because it is home to the anti-fascist fighter Paul. It offers a sense of belonging and tradition.

Yet this backward-looking discourse seems hardly compatible with the film-makers' express concern for the development of the GDR and for the plight of the individual. The final sequence depicting Peter's reluctant acceptance into the traditional village community indicates the shortcomings of

²⁷⁶ Güter [sic] Agde, 'Es ist zum Weinen: *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* von Frank Vogel', *Filmspiegel* (Berlin) 3 (1990), p. 27.

²⁷⁷ Boa and Palfreyman, p. 133.

this rural world and raises the issue of the viability of this lifestyle for the former urbanite. Furthermore, the depiction of the urban in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* is not merely negative. Rather the town is Janus-faced, made up of a conglomeration of the positive and negative traits traditionally associated with the city. It is at once a place of unruliness and criminality *and* a place of freedom, a place of potential sexual exploitation *and* a place of erotic pleasures, a place which has been overrun by a parasitic, alien culture *and* a place of creative cultural plurality. Moreover, the town is both a site of non-productive excess and of industrial production, a place of stifling rationalism as well as a place of scientific creativity. The positive dimensions of urban life evoked in the film's first half also serve to unsettle the film's closure.

The representation of Weimar in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* is oddly artificial. Although it is a provincial town that has been traditionally linked with anti-metropolitan culture, its depiction here has, in part, a markedly metropolitan aspect. Furthermore, the film reveals a typically German ambivalence towards the urban. This tendency in German culture is generally attributed to the very rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of the nation in the late nineteenth century and the sudden dissolution of social and regional ties. In the popular imagination the city was connected with poverty, disease, prostitution and social insurrection, and the National Socialists associated the city with degeneracy and cosmopolitanism because of its connection with the left-wing, working-class movements and large Jewish populations.²⁷⁸ In the cultural discourse of Weimar Germany there was, however, an increasingly positive evaluation of the freedoms that city life offered, such as social

²⁷⁸ Hanno Möbius, 'Heimat im nationalsozialistischen Stadtfilm', *Heimat: Augen-Blick 5* (Marburg: Schüren-Presse, 1988), pp. 31-44 (p. 33).

mobility, sexual emancipation and the pleasures of mass culture. Peter's failed effort to turn Anne into a vamp rather grotesquely evokes such values. Aspects of the cinematic representation of the urban in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and the previous films that I have analysed suggest an ongoing uneasy relationship with the sociological dimensions of modernity in the GDR. The introduction of a programme of economic modernisation at the beginning of the sixties and a shift to a greater emphasis upon consumer goods were increasingly putting traditional narratives of GDR identity under pressure. The SED faced competing imperatives as it attempted to modernise work processes, retain an identity distinct from the West and retain its monopoly of power. The depiction of space in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* seems riven by these tensions.

The representation of Weimar reveals similarities with the depiction of West Berlin in films such as *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser, Eine Berliner Romanze* and *Der geteilte Himmel*. The space that Peter and his drinking companions inhabit is linked with excessive consumption, predatory male sexuality and deviancy, and is de-centred. The town has no spatial focal point, and its inhabitants work or play twenty-four hours a day. Human relationships – even familial relationships – seem precarious, short-lived or contingent. There are signs that Western consumer values and what is depicted as Western brutality are beginning to take hold in the East. Ami, one of Peter's hoodlum friends who seems to spend his time looking for trouble, claims to have come to the East in order to get away from his parents in the West. He evokes the Federal Republic in his tales, telling stories about fast bikes and a 'Totenkopfbar' where people go if they want to commit suicide.²⁷⁹ Peter, who

²⁷⁹ As Uta Poiger points out in her article about 1950s youth gangs, the symbol of skull and crossbones was used by the SS (*Schutzstaffel*), but also by young West Berlin 'Halbstarke', by oppositional youth groups of the late 1930s known as Edelweiss-Piraten, and by the gang in

peppers his conversation with American expressions, is preoccupied with buying himself a new motorbike, and tries to impress Anne by buying her an expensive dress with West German currency in the *Exquisit* shop in Weimar.

The film emphasises the semi-illusory nature of the young men's city. Firstly, this is Weimar not the West, and they are – in part – living a life of make believe. The alleged dialogue between Peter and his father that the young rebel recounts to Anne sounds, for example, more like a conversation out of a Hollywood film. Secondly, many of the attractions that the city appears to offer are also short-lived or illusory. As Lutz notes, the brand new motorbike Peter desires is not actually in stock, and must first be fetched from the warehouse. Moreover, it remains out of reach after he spends all of his father's cash during a drinking spree. The motif of the elusive motorbike is a symbol for the West and its illusion of freedom, and the film's first half implicitly explains why Peter does not simply leave for the West, as Lutz observes.

Die Frage wird direkt nicht formuliert, dennoch ist sie in der Dramaturgie des Filmes impliziert. [...]: Der Westen – als Projektionsfläche für Wünsche nach Selbstbestimmung und Freiheit – ist Trug und stellt keine Lösung dar. [...] Mit Westgeld in der Tasche und den letzten Worten seines Vaters im Ohr, führt zu Beginn des Films Peters erster Weg in ein Motorradgeschäft. [...] Das Geld liegt auf dem Tisch, doch das Motorrad muß erst aus dem Lager geholt werden, er soll am nächsten Tag wiederkommen. [...] Am Abend verpraßt Peter das Geld [...].²⁸⁰ Am nächsten Tag sucht er [...] die Mutter [...] auf und bittet sie um Geld. Sie weigert sich, doch als Peter zuhause im Schreibtisch die Adoptionsurkunde entdeckt und die Wahrheit über seine Eltern erfährt, bittet sie ihn flehentlich das Geld zu nehmen, will ihm ihre Mutterliebe beweisen. Er ist verletzt und enttäuscht, [...] will das Geld nicht mehr. Die Episode seiner Suche, die von der Verführungskraft 'westlicher' Werte geleitet war, ist abgeschlossen. Die Assoziationskette

the US movie *The Wild Ones*. It is not clear here whether it is simply intended to emphasise the implied fascistic tendencies of Peter's associates and the West. See Poiger, 'Rebels with a Cause? American Popular Culture, the 1956 Youth Riots, and New Conceptions of Masculinity in East and West Germany', in *The American Impact on Postwar Germany*, ed. by Reiner Pommerin (Providence, RI and Oxford: Berghahn, 1995), pp. 93-124 (p. 97, pp. 119-120).

²⁸⁰ Lutz, p. 17.

Motorrad – Freiheit – Westen, verkörpert und initiiert durch den Vater, der jetzt der Vater nicht mehr ist, hat sich zerschlagen. Peter kauft kein Motorrad. Damit wird das Fortfahren als Möglichkeit ausgeblendet.²⁸¹

Weimar is, however, associated with more than simply the false allure of Western consumerism. The film presents other aspects of urban life whose potential is not exhausted by the end of the first half, or successfully closed off by Peter's decision to leave town.

Peter and Anne's visit to the Goethehaus in Weimar seems to offer a challenge to the depiction of the city as a place of negative Western influences or of illusory pleasures. As I shall explore in depth in the third section, it valorizes the creative potential of cultural fusion and heterogeneity. The ostensibly simple filmic morality which might appear to vilify the urban, because of the divergence between appearance and reality, is undermined by the film's depictions of the freedom and pleasures that can come simply from looking. These erotic pleasures are primarily male pleasures, and from the viewpoint of female spectatorship it is problematic that the prevailing roles are of male observer and female object.²⁸² Peter's erotically interested gaze might be interpreted as an implicit critique of predatory male sexuality and the corrupt city. Yet his gaze and his associated free-floating subject position issue a subversive challenge to a certain anti-erotic and repressive tendency manifested by the male authority figures. For women, by contrast, the town primarily appears to offer freedoms of a different kind, namely the possibility of economic independence and education.

Denk bloß nicht, ich heule depicts the metropolitan male, Peter, as the observer and women as the observed. At the very start of the film, the scene

²⁸¹ Lutz, pp. 17-18.

²⁸² Only Weimar's parks and the surrounding countryside seem to offer the possibility of reciprocal pleasures.

cuts from a shot of Peter's father's body slumped on the floor of his modern home to a high-angle view of Peter sauntering across a sunny urban street, looking around and surveying the scene. His exaggerated gait clearly signifies that there is no particular purpose or goal to his wanderings. The juxtaposition of the tense, claustrophobic darkly-lit domestic sequence with the shots of sunny, broad streets underlines the sense of release that Peter experiences. A passing woman is blatantly subjected to Peter's gaze, and the manner of her depiction demonstrates most clearly the pleasures of the city for the male spectator. She approaches – her whole body at first in the shot – in her scoop-necked, sleeveless dress and high-heeled shoes, getting closer and closer. We see him watching her while suggestively licking his ice cream. Then the camera takes his viewpoint and we watch her walk away down the street again with a languorous, hip-swinging gait. This woman seems almost a caricature of femininity with her ample bosom, narrow waist and broad hips. By contrast, Anne repeatedly refers to her own flat chest. Urban space even appears to produce more sexualised female bodies.

Peter's concern for the visual pleasures around him as he strolls through Weimar gives him the air of a *flâneur*. This figure is a key symbol for modernity, and has been consistently identified as male because women have not historically enjoyed the right to wander like this through city streets without the danger of being mistaken for prostitutes. *Flânerie* has been identified by cultural critics as a way of moving, seeing and being, as a subject-centred strategy for coping with the modern city, and an attempt to resist rational modernism. For Gleber, it is:

a mode of movement that is at the same time a process of reflection and a manner of walking with an attendant presence of mind and close attendance to images - the flâneur transcends

modern alienation through an epistemological process of intensive perception [...] [T]he flâneur moves freely in the streets, solely intent on pursuing his seemingly unique and individual experience of reality.²⁸³

Drawing on insights from Deleuze, Guattari and Sennett, David B. Clarke describes the *flâneur*'s mode of movement as an act of resistance to rational modernism, observing:

The *flâneur*'s existence was built upon the sustained disavowal of the cognitive ordering of space, in favour of a self-defined and self-centred *aesthetic* spacing. The contours of aesthetic space were traced out by way of a ludic peregrination, etched in a dimension transversal to those efforts to impose an orderly cognitive space.²⁸⁴

In this way, he argues, the *flâneur* submerged himself in a modern city which was not only free from the constrictions of tradition, but also from the functional efficacy of modern rationality. With the adoption of this *flâneur*-like pose Peter embodies a challenge to Röhle's rationalising impulse.

Röhle's modernist, system-centred vision is in complete contrast to Peter's subject-centred perspective. From the fixed, bird's-eye perspective of his office window, Röhle invites Peter to look out over the higgledy-piggledy roofs and spires of Weimar, and then proceeds to describe the scene:

Dächer, Türme, Straßen, elektrische Leitung, ein Chaos ... und doch ist alles nach einem bestimmten Prinzip geordnet. Man muß dieses Prinzip herausfinden, die Gesetzmäßigkeit erkennen. Das nenne ich Sinn für Leben ... sich einordnen und selber ordnen. Jeden Zentimeter seines Lebens vorausbestimmen, exakt ausführen. Ist das keine Aufgabe? Morgens frage ich mich immer... ist der Tag überschaubar? Ist er genau bemessen? Was für einen Sinn hätte sonst der Tag?

Röhle perceives Weimar as a tightly ordered structure in which everyone has a strictly defined function to play. His impoverished notion of self-determination

²⁸³ Anke Gleber, 'Female Flanerie and the *Symphony of the City*', in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. by Katharine von Ankum (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California, 1997), pp. 67-88 (p. 67).

²⁸⁴ David B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 5.

resides in identifying and subjugating oneself to this circumscribed role. The head teacher's controlling vision, which is facilitated by his position of power, seems to make apparent what has been described as 'the partiality and violence of any rationalist concept imposed on the space (and population) of the city'.²⁸⁵ Röhle's words bridge a visual transition from views of Weimar to shots of Peter drinking with a friend in a city pub. The satirical force of the young rebel's comment to his associate: 'Das ist kein Mensch, das ist ein Ordner' leaves the spectator in little doubt that this juxtaposition is not merely intended to reveal the flaws in Peter's approach towards life. The film seems to suggest that Röhle's attempts rigidly to impose order provoke rebellion. Neither Peter's adoption of the flâneur's free-floating, erotically interested gaze, nor Röhle's controlling vision is to be valorized. However, the contrast between the two positions does serve to cast Peter's urban pleasures in a more positive light.

For women, urban life is shown to offer emancipatory possibilities in the form of employment and education. The country, by contrast, is represented as a place in which more traditional, fixed, social and gender structures prevail. The employment of Peter's mother and Uschi in two non-traditional female professions outside the house indicates that the town could offer women new employment possibilities and some freedom from traditional gender roles. Peter's mother works as a machine operator in a factory, and Uschi is a physics student at the University of Jena, while Anne goes to school in Weimar. The factory and the scientific laboratory are spatially detached from Peter and Röhle's Weimar. Uschi's laboratory is quite simply in another town. Unlike the school, which is clearly located in Peter's urban space through establishing

²⁸⁵ Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires, 'Introduction', in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, ed. by Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), vii - xv (xiv).

shots, the filmic representation of the factory promotes the impression that it is on the city outskirts. This is underlined by Peter's mother's comments when he turns up at the factory, for she repeats three times in astonishment: 'Wie hast du bloß hierher gefunden?' This spatial dislocation might simply be intended to underline the distance between the world of work and that of excess, or to stress the modern division between home and workplace. As sites in the film narrative they seem rather marginal – almost tacked on. Their inclusion seems an attempt to present a microcosm of GDR society within the film narrative, and to acknowledge the importance of science and industry in the economy.

The association of these spaces with female characters also appears to be a strategy to help 'de-alienate' these key sites of production, and thus relies upon the positive associations of women in the film's gender symbolism. Uschi helps to humanise her well-equipped, pristine laboratory with her passionate talk of love and life, and is set up in contrast with her overly rational, cerebral supervisor.²⁸⁶ The almost surreal intervention of an instrument-playing group of colleagues dancing the conga through the laboratory also appears to be a rather crude strategy to impart an intimacy and warmth to the workplace and challenge conventional boundaries between work and pleasure. And the sequence at the factory where Peter meets his mother does not completely conceal the potentially alienating aspects of such an environment.²⁸⁷ Her reassurances that it does not take long to get accustomed to the deafening noise levels are unconvincing, as is her enthusiasm for the automated machinery at

²⁸⁶ The male intellectual, here as elsewhere in GDR film and literature of the 1960s and 1970s, is often a somewhat discredited or ambivalent figure. I am thinking for example of the chemist Hans in Kurt Maetzig's 1961 production *Septemberliebe*, the young scientist Manfred in *Der geteilte Himmel* or the student Klaus in Egon Günther's 1974 production *Die Schlüssel*.

²⁸⁷ Karen Ruoff Kramer makes a similar point in her article 'Representations of Work in the Forbidden DEFA Films', in *DEFA: East German Cinema 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), pp. 131-145 (p. 143).

her workplace which leaves her with virtually nothing to do. This in itself hardly upholds the Marxian objective of fulfilment through work and is also clearly not shared by her young male co-worker, who is at war with the male *Brigadier*. This conflict mirrors that of Peter and the three tractor drivers with Anne's father and with their *Brigadier* Blubberkopp. Peter's mother brings some maternal warmth to the factory, attempting to broker peace between the *Brigadier* and her young colleague who keeps trying to quit.

Despite its heterogeneity and erotic attractions, Peter leaves Weimar for the country, setting up a makeshift home in the sheep shed shown to him by Anne. It is her father who – reluctantly – finally offers him a proper abode, after she has provided the young man with a bridge to this world. The fragmented relationships of urban life contrast with the durability and emotional strength of social relations in the country. The key social meanings associated with the country are love, work and tradition; the chief social structures are the family and the farming community. Despite the relative economic insignificance of agriculture, a number of films, as well as dramas, were produced in the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s that were set on collective farms. Wolfgang Emmerich surmises that this preoccupation was inherited from Soviet Russia where agriculture and land reform had been much more important, noting, too, that a collective farm also represented a useful microcosm for representing social transformation.²⁸⁸ But unlike earlier films, such as Kurt Maetzig's popular 1957 production *Schlösser und Katen* and Frank Beyer's 1959 production *Eine alte Liebe*, Vogel's film is not concerned with depicting the restructuring of the rural community and agricultural

²⁸⁸ Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981), p. 108.

processes. Instead it promotes a vision of the countryside that is startlingly traditional.

The lack of mechanisation in the LPG is striking. In the field scenes the labour is depicted as being largely manual, and the representatives of modern farming methods, the three young tractor drivers, spell nothing but trouble. In fact they are refusing to join the agricultural collective because they don't want to lose out financially. The farm buildings are also centuries old. The first time Anne's father and Peter meet we can see ancient half-timbered buildings in the background and a ploughshare in the foreground. In many ways the rural community resembles what Bakhtin describes as the idyllic chronotope.²⁸⁹ A prime characteristic of the idyll is the unity of time and place. Bakhtin describes this unity as 'an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a particular territory [...] to one's own home [...]. Idyllic life and its events are inseparable from this concrete, spatial corner of the world where the fathers and the grandfathers lived and where one's children and their children will live.'²⁹⁰ The depiction of the countryside conveys above all a strong sense of belonging and tradition.

The repetition of a number of similar bedtime sequences with Anne and her father reinforces this sense of belonging. Anne's bedroom is portrayed as a locus of emotional security and reassuring familiarity. The decor of the room indicates their long-standing links with this house and the area. The bedroom appears to contain a number of relics from her childhood, such as the handmade wire horse and the drawing pinned to the wall. The traditional gingham curtains, the brass bedstead and the rickety hand-made bookshelves

²⁸⁹ Bakhtin, pp. 224-236.

²⁹⁰ Bakhtin, p. 225.

look as if they might have been used and even made by past generations, and contrast with the decor of the Naumanns' flat with its up-to-date furniture, fabrics and mass-produced ornaments. In Anne's room there is also a small radio and some books. The space is thus also linked with more traditional forms of pleasure than those found in Peter's urban home, in which the television is such a prominent feature.

The sequences depicting her father's visits to say goodnight are a signifier and index for the intimacy of the relationship between father and daughter. In the first two scenes a very similar shot pattern is employed, emphasising the almost ritualised nature of these visits. Both sequences begin with a shot of Anne lying in bed and then cut to her father, panned by the camera as he walks into the room and sits down in the old armchair. The focal range emphasises the closeness between father and daughter, for Paul is generally framed in *plan américain* or medium shot, and Anne in medium shot or medium close up. On both occasions he begins the conversation with the same question, and only when their relations are strained because of her growing feelings for Peter is this pattern upset. The motif of the *Dornröschenstuhl*, the arm of which is continually falling off and which Anne's father never gets round to fixing, also connotes familiarity as well as the simplicity and modesty of the family's way of life. It resembles the loose staircase bannister in the 1940s US film *It's a Wonderful Life*, which initially irks the main character George Bailey because it reminds him of his lack of material success, but which ultimately comes to signify a reassuring sense of home.²⁹¹ In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* Anne's father at first laughingly grumbles about the chair, but after the emotional confrontation in the

²⁹¹ *It's a Wonderful Life*, director Frank Capra, 1946.

shepherd's hut, the breaking off of the arm reminds father and daughter of their closeness and serves to bring them together again.

In the idyll, Bakhtin argues, the unity of the life of the generations in a particular place blurs temporal boundaries between individual lives and between stages of an individual life.²⁹² This and the real link between nature and events in human life also contribute to the 'cyclic rhythmicalness of time' that Bakhtin identifies as being characteristic of the agricultural idyll. In Vogel's film Paul's repeated emphasis upon Anne's resemblance to her mother seems to associate her with a less individualised, blurred sense of the self typical of the idyll. By contrast, Peter's foundling status along with his urban lifestyle means that he is not rooted in any kind of unity of the generations. The cyclical rhythm of life in the country is also emphasised by Paul's visits to his daughter's bedside at the same time every night. Events in the village are depicted as being governed by the weather and the availability of daylight. During the day the village inhabitants work in the fields, and at dusk we see the tractors rumbling back into the village. At night Paul tells Anne that he will manage to finish his work if the weather stays fine. In Weimar, in contrast, time is seen as fragmented and human activity is not regulated according to the divisions between night and day. In the evening Peter takes to the town's bars while his mother works night shift in the factory. In Weimar, social and physical worlds are clearly no longer co-terminous. Peter has fleeting experiences with strangers on the street or chance meetings with acquaintances.

In the second half of the film the depiction of the teenager's return from his visit to Röhle in the town serves to juxtapose these different social models in a particularly direct fashion. The young protagonist rails drunkenly against

²⁹² Bakhtin, p. 225.

the farm workers, they stand facing him, completely immobile, in a carefully arranged tableau. The workers are grouped around the field in male-female pairs, and the scene seems to contrast the heterosexual couple as the basic social unit bound into a larger rural collective and the isolated urban individual. With his drunken, over-accentuated, uncontrolled body movements, which are a throwback to his father's earlier behaviour, Peter becomes a cipher for urban chaos in the midst of this unnaturally static country scene. *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* thus pits a model of collective identity, associated with a traditional farming community and linked to a German past predating the GDR, against this conception of a more unstable, insecure urban identity associated to some degree with the West and with one side of Peter's character. At the same time the narrative links this relapse in the young protagonist's behaviour to Röhle's refusal to allow Peter to return to school and embark upon a more stable route to individual development and growth. There is a conflict between the biographical time implicit in the representation of Peter's quest, reminiscent of a *Bildungsroman*, with its emphasis upon his various life stages and his future career possibilities, and the cyclic time that prevails in the countryside.²⁹³ Consequently, the film reveals a tension between communal life and the individual growth and development that Peter desires. At the beginning of the film, the young rebel is adamant that he does not want to waste his life away on a *kolkhoz*, and even by the end it seems unlikely that Peter will satiate his ambitions in this rural community.

The shortcomings of the pastoral world are underlined in the final scene in the village hall in which Peter's uneasy integration takes place. One

²⁹³ I am here drawing upon a discussion of different conceptions of time in 'Homeward-Bound: Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* for the 1980s', in Boa and Palfreyman, pp. 173-175.

particularly conspicuous deficit of this rural society is its cultural impoverishment. When Peter enters the village hall to ask Anne's father for her hand, the villagers are watching a guest-act involving entertainers dressed in Dutch costume performing on stage, with dogs that walk on their hind legs and are dressed up in human clothes. A cultural event even of this substandard kind is depicted as a rare occurrence. In a society keen to show itself marching into the future, this hardly conveys a sense of progress and development, especially when compared with Goethe's achievements eulogised earlier in the film. Nor does a young town dweller, like Peter, seem likely to be satisfied by entertainment of this kind. In a test viewing of *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, the questionable quality of the cultural programme on offer attracted comment from a number of the young members of the audience. Some were critical of the film, implying that entertainment of this kind was not representative and merely distracted from the narrative. One student concluded, by contrast, that it was unfortunately all too realistic.²⁹⁴

The bizarre nature of this act hints, too, at a filmic subtext. The folkloric costumes worn by the performers hint at a degraded form of community, and at a culture in which the view of the Other is based on reductive stereotypes. As Peter is about to enter the community hall, the German-ness of this community is suggested by the sound off of a choir singing about the *Vaterland*. Earlier in Weimar, the foreign is depicted as an enriching, inspiring impulse in the Goethehaus sequence, here the entertainers' Dutch costumes appear to represent a facile attempt to engage with or to satirise the Other. Moreover, an act consisting of performing dogs clad in human clothes also alludes to the limitations of personal freedom in this society. The issuing of Peter's challenge

²⁹⁴ Mückenberger, *Prädikat*, pp. 343-344.

to Anne's father as he steps out onto the stage shortly after the slapstick sketch has finished represents a scarcely veiled message to an authoritarian father-state.²⁹⁵

Peter's isolated positioning on stage underlines the gulf between him and this rural community, and is underlined by the camerawork that shows the audience in shallow focus as a blurred sea of faces. The reaction of the other villagers to Peter underlines how unwelcoming this type of community can be to outsiders like Peter. In the first shot of the audience, there is a shouted invitation for Peter to join the local fire brigade which provokes general laughter. One man appears on the point of offering him a job milking cows, but another is less than enthusiastic and counters mistrustfully: 'Nee, er macht uns nur Scherereien. Vielleicht sucht ihn sogar die Polizei.' The village is mapped out as a closed community where there is little leisure time and where scopic pleasures are minimal, and Anne's home is depicted as subject to paternal control. It is love, as embodied in the figure of Anne, which is presented as compensation for the surrendered freedoms of the city. By using the affective power of a woman – and a woman who is closely associated with the private home – to evoke a sense of belonging, the film reinforces many of the traditional gender associations of woman with home, hearth and nurturing. In the next section I shall examine the way that the film also genders national time, and uses Anne's affective power to revivify the anti-fascist tradition.

²⁹⁵ See Boa and Palfreyman, p. 142.

Revisiting the GDR Past: Buchenwald and the Goethehaus

The past is of key importance in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*. The GDR's anti-fascist narrative and the state's claim to be the sole heir to the German Classical heritage were, as I describe in the introduction to this thesis, central to official definitions of national identity, and the film engages very directly with these dominant historical and cultural narratives in sequences set at symbolic locations in and around the town of Weimar. In this section I shall touch briefly upon the episode set at the Nazi parade hall, the Sauckelburg, but my analysis will primarily concentrate upon the scenes at the Goethehaus and Buchenwald, demonstrating how the interplay of action and setting in these two locations constructs models of identity that stand in tension with one another. Whereas the Goethehaus episode largely challenges the restraining social and aesthetic norms linked with the state's interpretation of the Classical *Erbe* and issues a plea for more openness, self-fulfilment and pleasure in the present, the latter seeks to modify but also revivify the anti-fascist tradition, emphasising the debt of the living to the dead. I shall demonstrate how this dichotomy is managed through gender difference, looking first at the three sequences set at the monument park at the camp site that are associated primarily with Anne, before moving on to look at the Goethehaus episode in which Peter plays the leading role.

The three sequences at Buchenwald chart the difficult course of Anne's love for Peter, who initially does not requite the schoolgirl's feelings, but whom she is slowly able to win round. The use of a former concentration camp as a setting to stage love scenes seems a somewhat startling choice, especially

from a Western viewpoint.²⁹⁶ In the East, Buchenwald was coded rather differently than in the West. Rather than being seen as a place of national shame, even primarily as a place of death, it was linked instead to noble suffering and rebirth.²⁹⁷ The ostensible self-liberation of communist fighters from the camp near Weimar gave it particular symbolic significance within the framework of the GDR's foundational myth. The narrative served to obscure the inglorious circumstances of the state's origins and to depict the state instead as the product of the anti-fascist struggle. In her analysis, Lutz notes the links between the generational conflict and the anti-fascist tradition and argues: 'Ein Anliegen des Filmes ist es, die antifaschistische Tradition innerhalb der sozialistischen Wertewelt zu betonen.'²⁹⁸ In this regard Anne plays a significant narrative role, for the unfolding story of Anne's self-sacrificing love for Peter becomes merged with the GDR's national narrative during the sequences at Buchenwald.

Test audiences in 1965 showed mixed reactions to the way the film attempts to link past and present by the staging of adolescent love scenes at the National Memorial Park, the GDR's largest monument to the victims of fascism. One teacher clearly found the association close to an act of desecration, asking: 'Warum wird ein solches hehres Denkmal wie Buchenwald zu so niedrigen Zwecken missbraucht?'²⁹⁹ In a later showing at the *Junge Welt* film club a viewer, identified in the protocol simply as M., comments: 'Sehe Buchenwald so: Das ist die Vergangenheit, auf der wir

²⁹⁶ In the 1969 DEFA film *Zeit zu leben*, directed by Horst Seemann, the camp is also linked with the themes of love and sex.

²⁹⁷ Peter C. Pfeiffer, 'The National Identity of the GDR: Antifascism, Historiography, Literature', in *Cultural Transformations in the New Germany: American and German Perspectives*, ed. by Friederike Engler and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia, SC: Camden House, (1993), pp. 22-41 (p. 26).

²⁹⁸ Lutz, p. 11.

²⁹⁹ Mückenberger, *Prädikat*, p. 334.

bauen. Aber wir müssen unseren Weg trotzdem neu und von Anfang an suchen.³⁰⁰ These comments seem to suggest that this historical narrative should not be allowed to have too much influence over the present and the future. While the anti-fascist myth discharged many of the older East Germans from their responsibilities for the Nazi past, it was also used to legitimise morally the GDR's leaders, some of whom were indeed active in the resistance, to justify their right to dictate to the younger generation and to discredit opposition to their policies. The film clearly reveals the authoritarian potential of this historical narrative. In his conversation with Röhle in the second Sauckelburg sequence, discussed briefly earlier in this chapter, Peter rejects the head teacher's argument that the younger generation are not in a position to decide over their own lives because they have no first-hand experience of the Nazi period. At the same time the film also warns of the dangers of forgetting the past. In the first Sauckelburg sequence it reveals the ongoing need for vigilance in the fight against reactionary tendencies through the actions of the fascistic hoodlums, who threaten to burn the soles of the head teacher's feet with cigarettes. The Buchenwald sequences seek to mediate the anti-fascist narrative in an emotionally appealing way, recasting it slightly, too, by linking it with love.

The first Buchenwald episode is preceded by the conversation between Anne and her father in which they discuss how to approach the problem of unrequited love, and which, as I mention earlier, turns into a discussion about different approaches to life in GDR society. In this first sequence, Anne's sexual love for Peter begins to become merged with more nebulous concepts of

³⁰⁰ This is quoted from the note-based protocol from this viewing. See Mückenberger, *Prädikat*, p. 343.

social and national 'love'. It suggests that only the understanding, patient love manifested by Anne can win over someone like Peter. A parallel is drawn between the young man's lack of attachment to the *Volksrepublik*, and his initial resistance to the young woman's love. The slow cutting rhythm and frequent switching from extreme long shot, to long and medium shot emphasise the unsteadiness of relations between the couple and draw attention to their surroundings. In the first long, tracking shot we see Anne helping Peter to revise for the *Abitur* and their hands meeting and parting again as they walk along together. In the next shot a tracking camera follows the couple as they walk towards the horizon, but then halts and a bittersweet, melancholic music, repeated in the third Buchenwald sequence, starts up as they join hands again and move off into the distance. At first the music appears merely to underscore the significance of the setting, but it also anticipates Anne's pain and hurt when Peter spurns her and then walks away. Her suffering also evokes the pain of the past. The sequence ends with her looking towards the park's main sculpture, a triumphal monument of a group of prisoners, intended to represent a historical and national new beginning.³⁰¹ As in *Der geteilte Himmel*, the young female figure is instrumentalised to express historical suffering, while elsewhere the older male figures only obliquely allude to their experiences in the Nazi past.

The second Buchenwald episode is preceded by a sequence in which Peter breaks off his mindless rote learning of 'facts' about the GDR to ask Anne if she loves 'Die Republik'. While the young woman unhesitatingly affirms her feelings for the GDR, Peter denies any attachment to the state and announces that he is not prepared to lie about it, revealing once more his unwillingness to display outward conformity. Peter is clearly impressed by her

³⁰¹ This sculpture by Fritz Cremer at Buchenwald is entitled 'Revolt of the Prisoners'.

response, for instead of condemning him like Röhle she asks him the reasons for his disaffection. This anticipates the growing intimacy between them that is depicted in the following sequence at the camp's monument park. In these scenes the young couple talk about both the future and the past. As they walk over the square formerly known as *Freudenplatz* with the Cremer sculpture in the distance, Peter fantasises about being a spaceman and imagines Anne becoming a poet and broadcasting by radio a poem to him in orbit, while Anne contemplates what gifts she would give her lover to take with him into space. Peter's spaceman dreams associate him with modernity, mobility and the future. Anne literally becomes his link with the land. The young woman's imagined act of giving reinforces her role as the mediator of history for the imagined presents include tokens of her own personal past and the GDR's cultural history, namely a childhood photo, a book by Schiller and her *Dornröschenstuhl*, a signifier for home. This micro-narrative constructs gendered relationships to national space and to national time.

Depicted against the background of the circular graves at Buchenwald, her emphasis upon the need to make a gift of one's most treasured possessions evokes the sacrifices of the communist resistance fighters. The portrayal of this selfless act of giving could also be an implicit plea to the communist survivors to be less possessive of their power over the nation. In the ensuing monologue she restates the GDR's founding myth, as she talks of the *Vaterland* being a bequest from the dead. Once again love and suffering are evoked in close association, as she describes the nation as offering a place both for love and for sadness. Finally, we hear Anne, in sound off, reciting a rather odd couplet on the theme of death: 'Die Könige von Babylon und so, sie gingen reich beschenkt zu Grabe. Ihr Toten, was macht euch im Grabe froh von allen

Schätzen, die ich habe?’ The second line conveys a notion that the living have a debt to the dead, echoing the moral message implicit in the Buchenwald narrative in GDR official discourse. This rather self-abnegating message is to some extent countered by its juxtaposition with a sequence depicting the couple, on Peter’s instigation, going skinny-dipping at night. The third and final image of Buchenwald consists of a single shot and shows Rita alone, bowed over and clearly in distress. This scene is sandwiched between the sequence in the shepherd’s hut in which Anne’s attempts to mediate between father and lover seems finally to have failed, and the sequence at the Nazi parade hall when Peter is involved in the hoodlums’ attack upon his teacher. The juxtaposition underlines the supraindividual dimension of this narrative. The Buchenwald sequences are intended to play to the spectators’ emotions, evoking pity for Anne and rallying support for the anti-fascist tradition.

Counterbalanced to the self-sacrificing model of identity linked with Anne and with Buchenwald is a less constraining paradigm from the German cultural past. The film makes a plea for a more liberal mode of being, by evoking Goethe and the German Classical tradition in a way at odds with their standard interpretation in the GDR. The sequence set in the Goethehaus seeks to subvert, or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, to flesh out the dominant narrative on Goethe. While the Buchenwald and Sauckelburg sequences encode subject positions that are at least partly in thrall to history, the sequence set in the Goethehaus uses a cultural model from the past to evoke a more dynamic subject position with room for individual expression, self-gratification and pleasure in the here-and-now. Associated, above all, with Peter’s erotic playfulness, the sequence encodes a more sensual model of the relations between Anne and Peter than is presented in the scenes at the camp.

Furthermore, in contrast to the Sauckelburg episode in which foreign influences represent a threat, in the Goethehaus sequence cultural diversity is positively connoted.

In the GDR not only Goethe's works, but also Goethe, the man, was, as Patricia Herminghouse observes, instrumentalized in official propaganda 'to re-educate the population, mobilize the economy, and legitimate the state' and thus 'drafted into an ideology far removed from his own'.³⁰² He was frequently cast as a figure incessantly striving through his work to realise the humanistic goal of human perfectibility. As Emmerich notes:

Insbesondere Goethe wurde, seit dem Jubiläumsjahr 1949, als 'das Vorbild eines stets arbeitenden Menschen' hervorgehoben, dessen Wesen 'von einem tätigen Humanismus' erfüllt worden sei. Seine Faust-Gestalt galt als Prototyp des sich 'gesellschaftlich und tätig bewährenden Menschen'.³⁰³

However, the role scripted for him was based on a blinkered account of his life and his oeuvre. Goethe was urbane, progressive, open to – at least some – foreign influences, and far from chaste in his love relations or austere in his lifestyle. The film-makers seem to have realised, as Brecht did in the 1950s and a number of other GDR writers in the 1970s, as Herminghouse observes, that '[t]he same Goethe who can be used to provide legitimation and affirmation of political and cultural tendencies can also be used to challenge established aesthetic and social norms [...]'.³⁰⁴ Through the interplay between the *mise-en-scène* and intertextual references to Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan* the scene challenges the puritanical model of relationships between the sexes, and provides a model of subjectivity with more room for individual self-fulfilment

³⁰² Patricia Herminghouse, 'Trends in Literary Reception Coming to Terms with Classicism: Goethe in GDR Literature of the 1970s', *German Quarterly*, 56 (1983), 273-284 (p. 275 and p. 273).

³⁰³ Emmerich, p. 82.

³⁰⁴ Herminghouse, p. 274.

and pleasure. Although the paradigm is drawn from the past, it is used to justify a more present-centred mode of being. It also unsettles the dichotomy in the plot structure which opposes German family values to 'foreign' sexuality and pleasure. With its evocations of Goethe as a cosmopolitan *Weltbürger*, the scene expresses a desire for a more generous, pluralistic notion of cultural identity. The GDR state's claim to be the sole heir to the German Classical heritage and its attempt to monopolise the right to interpret this heritage was an important part of a strategy to shore up its own power. The single, densely allusive sequence at the Goethehaus calls into question the state's custodial approach to the cultural *Erbe*.

Love and sexuality are thematised in a number of different ways in the narrative action and the *mise-en-scène* in the Goethehaus scene. By contrast with the three sequences at Buchenwald, there is only a single sequence set in the Goethehaus, a historical space in the town which is otherwise primarily characterised through the narrative as a space of modernity. The pair visit the museum presumably at the behest of Anne who is interested in Classical literature. Yet although Anne, as I have shown above, is frequently linked with the German past, this is a historical space where Peter is central. With his erotically playful and questioning behaviour, he refuses to conform to the norms of behaviour displayed by the other visitors, and here for the first time the couple kiss. The sequence also offers a partly veiled critique of the strictures of the 'sozialistische Moral' propagated by the state.³⁰⁵ As Lutz notes: 'Die Sequenz bricht den Begriff von Liebe gleich mehrfach; Es geht um den Versuch einer neuen Definition, die sich distanziert von einem

³⁰⁵ The Goethehaus is also featured again in connection with the issues of sexuality and authority in a 1981 film, directed by Erwin Stranka. In *Die Stunde der Töchter* Nanny, the youngest child of a *Kaderleiter* who looks disapprovingly upon his daughter's promiscuity, is depicted bouncing around on a bed in the Goethehaus with her latest lover.

vertrockneten bildungsbürgerlichen Verständnis, ebenso von romantischer Überhöhung.³⁰⁶ We are presented with a rather more eroticised model of relations between the couple who chastely hold hands at Buchenwald.

Central to its subversive effect is the citation of the *West-Östlicher Divan*, one of Goethe's later poetical works celebrating passion, drink and song. It is a reference that hints at Goethe's own less than chaste lifestyle. The poems were inspired by a trip to the Rheinland in 1814 in which he met and appears to have fallen in love with Marianne, the bride-to-be of his acquaintance von Willemer in Frankfurt.³⁰⁷ In the love poems of the *Buch Suleika*, which date from Goethe's journey west in the following year, Goethe and Marianne, it is argued, are respectively cast in the role of the lovers Hatem and Suleika. The poetry was the product not only of a real journey, but also of an imaginary one. Goethe drew his literary inspiration for the poems from the work of the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz. The *West-Östlicher Divan* is a work of art which could be said to be essentially characterised by dialogue, not only in terms of its cross-cultural provenance but also in terms of its form and even its authorship, for some poems were written by Marianne von Willemer.³⁰⁸ The West and East in the title of Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan* did not simply refer to the Occident and the Orient, but alluded to Western and Eastern Germany, to the Rhine-Main region and Weimar. Goethe, who was living a somewhat straitjacketed existence in Weimar, associated the warmer, wine-growing area in the West with the freer existence of his youth, referring

³⁰⁶ Lutz, p. 21.

³⁰⁷ See Erich Trunz's account in *West-Östlicher Divan, Goethes Werke*, Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, ed. and annotated by Erich Trunz, (Hamburg: Wegner, 1949), 2, p. 541. Goethe's work was originally published in 1819.

³⁰⁸ See Trunz's account, in Goethe, *West-Östlicher Divan*, pp. 542-543. See, too, D. R. Midgley, "Wiederfinden": Cosmic Vision and Cultural Fusion in the *Westöstlicher Divan*, *German Life and Letters*, 36 (1982-83), 87-98, p. 91.

to the area's 'Glanz und Heiterkeit' in a letter to Nikolaus Meyer of 18 January 1815.³⁰⁹ The ambivalence of the title of *West-östlicher Divan* lends additional subversive force to its citation in the film. The intertextual reference challenges provincial tendencies in GDR cultural policy.

The very space of the museum represented in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* constitutes a cipher for the state's proprietorial or custodial stance towards canonical culture, an attitude, which is, as Emmerich notes, more generally reflected in the centrality of the concepts of 'erben' or the 'Erbe', and related terms, in GDR cultural-political discourse:

Geistig-literarische Produktionen der Vergangenheit wurden als 'Güter' oder 'Schätze' wahrgenommen, die man sich 'aneignen', von denen man 'Besitz ergreifen' müsse. Die 'Pflege', die 'Erhaltung' eines Erbes, das vor den Verfälschungen, Beschädigungen, Verstümmelungen, ja der 'Zerstörung' durch den imperialistischen Gegner zu schützen war, stand auf dem Spiel. Auch Wörter wie 'Testamentsvollstrecker', 'Treuhänderschaft', 'Nachlaßverwalter', 'Erbmasse', die dem bürgerlichen Recht entstammen, fehlten nicht, wenn vom Umgang des Volkes mit der literarischen Überlieferung die Rede war.³¹⁰

The tour through the Goethehaus depicts an attempt to fix the museum's 'content', for the guide tells visitors how they should apprehend things rather than letting them engage with the space themselves. In the first shot Anne is pictured listening to the tour guide's citation of facts and figures about the history of the house. This is the first of three very similar shots and shows her, standing passively, among a group of other visitors, with a marble bust in the background. The female guide's deferential reference to Goethe as 'Der Meister' also underlines the canonization of the Great Men of German culture in the GDR, and once again casts a female figure in the role of the mediator of a predominantly male-authored, cultural-historical identity.

³⁰⁹ See Trunz in Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, pp. 541-542.

³¹⁰ Emmerich is here partly drawing on the work of Klaus Dautel. See Emmerich, p. 47.

In contrast to the predominantly female viewers, the young male protagonist Peter shows no inclination to share in this act of reverence. Standing apart from the others, he begins jokingly to scratch the chin of a Classical nude sculpture. The sculptures at Buchenwald and the Goethehaus could be seen as representing almost competing pantheons. As Peter continues to fool around, Anne is flashed a stern look by a rather staid-looking older female visitor, whose petty intolerance towards a pretty harmless display of youthful high spirits also seems strangely out of place in the house of a poet whose life challenged social mores and whose poetry celebrated sensuality. Peter's restless movements contrast with the static shots of the other visitors and his actions underline the lifelessness of the space. As the guide continues to recite and describe Goethe's work, Peter contemptuously echoes the guide's reference to 'sinnvolle Liebe', and subsequently also challenges the notion of a higher love, triggering a discussion with Anne that leads her, impressed by his willingness to speak his own mind, to kiss him for the first time. Peter's depiction in front of a globe alludes to Goethe's cosmopolitanism and the young protagonist's desire for more openness. His comments challenge the idea that culture is something that should be merely passively received, turning the guide's monologue into a dialogue and subverting the model of power relations originally in place.

The sequence establishes a number of oppositions that appear intended to call into question cultural and social norms in the GDR. The guide's monologic account of Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, in sound off, stands in tension to this fundamentally dialogic work, while her rather po-faced talk of love also contrasts with the unbridled sensuality of some of Goethe's work. Her reading, and by extension, the official reading of Goethe, is a misreading.

Scenes involving two nuns seem intended to make veiled allusions to the puritanical attitudes of the party and the self-abnegating model of identity propagated by the regime. The guide's reference to 'heilige Liebe', at the point when the nuns first appear, would seem to be something akin to a sight gag underscoring the difference between the Goethean concept of ascendance through a spiritual and sexual union and GDR asceticism and petty-mindedness. The nuns are shown walking past a Classical mythological painting of a nude woman. One of the nuns has clearly looked at it, but seems to be advising the other to look away. The latter dutifully proceeds past with her eyes lowered. Anne and Peter, by contrast, both stop to take a longer look at the painting. The excessively prudish behaviour of the nuns is contrasted with the young protagonists' curiosity and openness towards the sensuality depicted in this cultural artefact.

At the end of the sequence the guide's words 'Woher sind wir geboren? Aus Lieb' form a sound bridge to scenes of Peter and Anne becoming more intimate in the park. Again her pious solemnity contrasts with what she is reading, and even more comically with the words of Peter, who is trying to impress Anne with his sexual know-how, explaining to the inexperienced Anne that he has just given her a French kiss. He tells her that the Indians have a book in which a thousand different kinds of kisses are listed, a numerical hyperbole that is perhaps a wry allusion to the final poem of the *Buch Suleika*, 'In tausend Formen magst du dich verstecken', a poem in which a lover eulogizes a beloved. Anne responds with a mixture of curiosity and reserve to Peter's demonstrations. Her question, 'Welcher Kuß ist Liebe?', underlines the contrast between his stereotypically masculine concern with the pleasures of the body and the mechanics of sex and her stereotypically feminine concern for

emotion and meaning. The series of contrasts and juxtapositions reveals the stifling nature of official culture in the GDR.

The Goethehaus with its intertextual allusions offers the glimpse of a sexuality free from paternal control and an image of cultural plurality that is not attained in the film's resolution. Although the Goethe text cited in the sequence is the *West-östlicher Divan*, it is hard not to evoke the writer's name without also evoking the youthful zeal of his *Sturm und Drang* period and the character of Werther in *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, who was unable to find expression for his love and his talents. In this way the film could be said to anticipate Plenzdorf's reworking of the Werther figure in his novel *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W*, whose latterday hero Edgar Wibeau felt there was no space in GDR society for his individual aspirations. The Goethehaus sequence and other intertextual allusions, to the likes of Galois, function as subplots that go some way to legitimising the younger generation's challenge to paternal power and thus call an already ambiguous ending even further into question.

Ultimately, the familial and gender discourses deployed to construct national identity in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* seem to be less than effective in reconciling the tensions and contradictions in GDR society which threaten to break through, just like Peter's tears. While the film ends by appearing to reconcile the rebellious youth through the good offices of the daughter, his integration, as I have shown, is unconvincing. By quite literally staging the sequence that leads to Peter's begrudging acceptance into this community, the film focuses attention on the artificiality of its conflict resolution. The community is shown as having little room for individual ambition and

creativity, and the opening to the future is slim.³¹¹ After Paul agrees to Peter's staying, he gives him one last piece of his mind, warning him: 'Bei uns helfen keine fixen Ideen. Und der Himmel ist bloß fürs Wetter da.' Only Anne's intervention gives a modest note of hope, for she challenges her father's gruff assertion, countering, 'Der Himmel is nicht bloß fürs Wetter da.' The sky here seems to symbolise a complex of ideas such as dreams, utopian hope and progress, alluding back to Peter's cosmonaut fantasies. But the young protagonist's ambiguous tears underline the lack of real narrative progress, for they evoke those that he sheds in the first sequence. While Anne in some senses is a more personalised character than Rita, her love, too, is instrumentalised to provide a sense of national belonging. Ultimately neither the young woman, so much a daughter, nor even the young man, now preparing reluctantly to enter the father's household, look likely to transfuse the GDR with the lifeblood of erotic vitality evoked through the Classical model.

³¹¹ Given the nature of the ending it is hard to believe that the original working title 'Unterwegs zu den Sternen' was not meant ironically.

Chapter Five: *Spur der Steine*

Introduction

Frank Beyer's *Spur der Steine* was the last of twelve films to be banned in the wake of the Eleventh Plenum. Part Western, part comedy and part socialist problem film, it thematised a number of controversial issues, including political dogmatism, dissent in the SED ranks, the malfunctioning of the command economy and the gulf between the working classes and the party.

Commissioned by the DEFA studio and based on Erik Neutsch's prizewinning *Bitterfeld* novel, it was released in June 1966 but withdrawn after a brief run. It was not publicly screened again for another twenty-three years.

Beyer did not direct another *Gegenwartsfilm* for DEFA until *Das Versteck* in 1977. This production and his TV film, *Geschlossene Gesellschaft*, of the following year, both centred on the lives of married couples and used the private to allegorise the public.³¹² In an interview for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 1990 Beyer referred to the latter film, featuring a couple who had swept their problems and conflicts under the carpet for years, as 'die vollständig introvertierte Fassung von *Spur der Steine*'. He described the earlier production, by contrast, as a 'sehr offener Film [...] mit einem weit gefaßten gesellschaftlichen Panorama'.³¹³ This break in his film-making style exemplifies a wider change of paradigm that took place after the political crackdown in the 1960s, although I shall argue that the depiction of the female

³¹² *Das Versteck*, director Frank Beyer, 1977; *Geschlossene Gesellschaft*, director Frank Beyer. GDR Television, 1978.

³¹³ H. G. Pflaum, "'Was sein wird, weiß niemand': Filmen in der DDR – Gespräch mit dem Regisseur Frank Beyer", *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 28 May 1990.

protagonist Kati already represents something of a transitional figure in comparison with earlier and later women characters.

Like the other directors of the films discussed in this thesis Beyer had a politicised concept of the role of film-making. Consonant with this was his interest in making *Gegenwartsfilme* first and foremost. Yet Beyer had little opportunity to pursue this interest because of a lack of good scripts dealing with contemporary issues.³¹⁴ When first offered the commission to turn Erik Neutsch's capacious novel into a film, he had some qualms about the feasibility of adapting a text of this magnitude. But the topicality of its subject matter persuaded him to put aside his misgivings.³¹⁵ Like Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel*, Neutsch's work was a product of the *Bitterfeld* initiative and, even though J.H.Reid contends that it remains a conformist novel because of the presence of the wise regional party secretary who is able to right the wrongs, he also points out that it was surprisingly critical for its time.³¹⁶ The final script produced by Beyer and his fellow scriptwriter differed considerably from its source in terms of structure and tone.³¹⁷ The scriptwriters replaced Neutsch's linear narrative, which culminates in the worker hero Balla's conversion to socialism, with a flashback narrative. Instead of retaining its four main plot strands, they concentrated on the action at the building site, foregrounding the relationship between Horrath and Balla, cast in the sheriff –

³¹⁴ Axel Geiss, 'Es gibt nicht mehr das frühere Zentrum: Der Regisseur Frank Beyer im Gespräch mit Axel Geiss', *medium*, 2 (1993) 54-57, (p. 54).

³¹⁵ Axel Geiss, *Repression und Freiheit: DEFA-Regisseure zwischen Fremd- und Selbstbestimmung* (Potsdam: Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997), p. 78.

³¹⁶ J.H. Reid, 'Erik Neutsch's *Spur der Steine*: The Book, the Play, the Film', *Geist und Macht: Writers and the State in the GDR: German Monitor* 29, ed. by Axel Goodbody and Dennis Tate (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992) pp. 59-67 (p. 59).

³¹⁷ For a discussion of the differences between book, play and film, see Reid, *ibid.*, pp. 59-67.

outcast style, and the love triangle between Balla-Kati-Horrath.³¹⁸ And they added comedy.

In his previous film, *Karbid und Sauerampfer*, a depiction of the problems of the post-war period and the difficulties of starting anew, Beyer had already experimented with using humour in the treatment of a serious topic.³¹⁹ In an interview in 1964 shortly after its making, Beyer defended this attempt to make a film that was entertaining but also earnest in intent:

Ich muß das eine machen und das andere nicht lassen. Anders geht es nicht; denn es darf nicht so sein, daß sich eine bestimmte Gruppe von Regisseuren auf Problemfilme konzentriert ... und eine andere Gruppe dazu da ist, den Unterhaltungsanspruch des Zuschauers zu befriedigen.³²⁰

Making people laugh seemed to be a good way of achieving his aim: to make relatively sophisticated, critical films with popular appeal.³²¹ The film even pokes fun at people's reluctance to go to see DEFA productions. Balla tries to coax Kati into going to the cinema with him, telling her: 'Mit Ihnen würde ich mir sogar einen DEFA-Film angucken.' *Spur der Steine* owes much of its humour to its references to the Western genre, as well as to the casting of Manfred Krug to play the role of Balla. Konrad Wolf's *Gegenwartsfilm Sonnensucher*, a rumbustious, Western-style portrait of the early pioneer days at the uranium mine in Wismuth, was one source of inspiration for Beyer, who had deliberately sought out Egel, one of Wolf's co-authors on this film, to

³¹⁸ Geiss, *Repression*, p. 78.

³¹⁹ *Karbid und Sauerampfer*, director Frank Beyer, 1963.

³²⁰ Cited by Richter, 'Frank Beyer', p. 15. From Hermann Herlinghaus, 'Frank Beyer, Der Künstler – weder Staatsanwalt noch Verteidiger', *film-wissenschaftliche mitteilungen*, 2 (1964), pp. 298ff.

³²¹ Geiss, 'Es gibt nicht mehr', p. 54.

collaborate on the project.³²² *The Magnificent Seven*, which had taken the GDR by storm in 1963, is an even more striking influence.³²³

Although he did not initially feel that the project was a particularly risky enterprise, he subsequently came to realise that he was entering 'ein Grenzgebiet des Erlaubten' during the process of adaptation.³²⁴ The scriptwriters had considerably magnified the critical content of the original material by concentrating its focus and introducing humour, as Beyer acknowledged upon the film's re-release:

Er [Neutsch] hatte seine Geschichte in viel Beiwerk verpackt, nur dadurch konnte er [Der Roman] überhaupt erscheinen – und wurde zum Bestseller, weil die Leute merkten, was da ist. Als wir herausgefunden hatten, daß man so eine Art Novelle aus den 900 Seiten herauskristallisieren konnte, war gleichzeitig klar, daß natürlich alles unheimlich verschärft wurde. [...] [I]ch wollte die ganze Geschichte komisch gebrochen haben. Die Komödie mildert die Schärfe nicht: sie verstärkt sie noch.³²⁵

The fact that Beyer had the confidence even to risk a project like *Spur der Steine* reflected a general mood of awakening among the cultural intelligentsia in the period after the building of the Wall. Like Christa Wolf and many others,

³²² Beyer cites Wolf's film as being one of the first influences on his work along with a number of Soviet films. *Sonnensucher* was itself banned in 1958 and only released in 1972. As Beyer later recounted: 'Der war zwar verboten, aber ich empfand ihn als einen jener Filme, wie ich sie mochte und selbst gern machen wollte: realistisch, spannend, politisch.' See Geiss, 'Es gibt nicht mehr', p. 54. Axel Geiss explains Beyer's reasons for selecting Egel as his co-scriptwriter. See *Repression*, p. 78.

³²³ *The Magnificent Seven*, directed by John Sturges and released in the United States in 1960, was the most popular film in the GDR in 1963. It was seen 3,118,309 times in just 13 weeks. These figures are cited by Joshua Feinstein from 'Filme mit den höchsten Besucherergebnissen 1963/1964', DR 1 4329 BAPots (HV-Film). See Joshua Feinstein, 'The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema: 1956-66' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 1995), p. 169.

³²⁴ Beyer states at one point: 'Ich hatte nicht das Gefühl besonders tollkühn zu sein oder auch nur besonders viel zu wagen. Der Stoff war mir ja von der Direktion der DEFA angeboten worden. Und im Lande war so etwas wie Aufbruchstimmung. Wir meinten, nun kritischer miteinander umgehen zu können.' See Geiss, 'Es gibt nicht mehr', p. 55. Elsewhere Beyer talks of the reform spirit abroad at the time and the lack of realisation on the part of film-makers and others that the cultural-political backlash in the Soviet Union would gradually filter into the GDR, adding: 'Bewusst war mir damals, daß ich mich mit der Dramatisierung des Romans in ein Grenzgebiet des Erlaubten begab.' See H. G. Pflaum, "'Was sein wird, weiß niemand': Filmen in der DDR – Gespräch mit dem Regisseur Frank Beyer', *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 28 May 1990.

³²⁵ Frauke Hanck, 'Vom Spaß am subversiven Humor, *Die Welt* (Berlin), 10 May 1990.

Beyer had perceived the building of the Wall as an opportunity to deal more frankly with the country's problems.³²⁶ *Spur der Steine* was one of a number of increasingly outspoken *Gegenwartsfilme* being produced in the studios at that juncture. Beyer was encouraged, like many others, by the flourishing of the reform movement in Czechoslovakia, the country where he had trained as a film-maker and where he still had close contacts.

As in the other films I have analysed, the critique offered by *Spur der Steine* was intended to be constructive. As Beyer stressed after the *Wende*: 'Mein Film wurde als Frontalangriff verstanden; dabei versuchte er nur zu erklären: Wenn ihr eine Chance haben wollt, dann müßt ihr die kreativen Kräfte des Landes um euch sammeln.'³²⁷ But Beyer's project met a mixed reception from a relatively early stage.³²⁸ The script was negatively appraised by Heinz Kimmel, the deputy of the *Kulturabteilung* of the *Zentralkomitee*, but, in the hope that *Spur der Steine* might help boost the studio's public reputation and help win back the favour of the SED leadership, both the studio management and *HV-Film* rejected calls for work to be halted. Work on the film continued even after the Eleventh Plenum, with the studio management granting Beyer's strategic request for extra time to finish the film and make sure it conformed to the Plenum's recommendations. A few months later it looked as if the director's delaying tactics had paid off.³²⁹ In March 1966 *HV-Film* gave the production of *Spur der Steine* the go-ahead subject to a number

³²⁶ In interview Frank Beyer said: 'Ich bin selbst Anhänger der These von der Schutzfunktion der Mauer gewesen. Ich habe den Mauerbau zwar nicht als Sieg empfunden, sondern als Niederlage – aber auch als Notwendigkeit. Nicht zufällig beginnt ja wenige [sic] Zeit nach dem Mauerbau eine Aufbruchstimmung in der DDR, von der auch alle diese Filme, die später verboten wurden, geprägt waren.' See H.G. Pflaum, loc. cit..

³²⁷ Ibid..

³²⁸ My account of the censorship history of *Spur der Steine* is based largely on Frank Beyer's account: 'Verbotene Filme: Erklärung des Regisseurs Frank Beyer in Berlin', *Der Morgen* (Berlin), 25 November 1989, and Geiss's account in *Repression*, pp. 79-87.

³²⁹ See Geiss, *Repression*, p. 80.

of cuts. Nonetheless, the Politburo and Central Committee continued to consult on the matter even after an edited version was passed by the Ministry of Culture in May, and the film was subsequently recommended for the category 'besonders wertvoll' and nominated for showing at an international festival.³³⁰ After a Politburo meeting in late June, at which chairman Walter Ulbricht himself was present, orders went out for screening to be restricted to a maximum of eight days, for all related publicity to be withdrawn and for Western crowd pullers like *Spartacus* to be put on in competition. Organised groups of hecklers were sent into cinemas showing *Spur der Steine* to disrupt screenings. The decision to scupper the film – by then branded as 'partei- und staatsfeindlich' – came from the men at the very top.

The withdrawal of Beyer's seventh feature film for DEFA had serious professional consequences for the director. He was told that he must leave the studios and that he could not work in either Berlin or Potsdam for the next two years. Beyer chose to go to Dresden where he spent several years working in the theatre, deciding against accepting a commission to film the second part of the Liebknecht series, which would have facilitated an earlier return to Babelsberg.³³¹ From the late sixties he worked as a director for GDR television, making *Rottenknechte* in 1969 and *Die sieben Affären der Doña Juanita* in 1972, and did not return to the studio until 1975 when he was involved in making *Jakob der Lügner*, a co-production with GDR television.³³² His first *Gegenwartsfilm* for DEFA after the ban, *Das Versteck*, also fell victim to

³³⁰ See Geiss, *Repression*, pp. 80-82, and Peter Claus, 'Die Spur der Steine und die Last der Erinnerung', *Junge Welt* (Berlin), 23 November 1989, and 'Verbotene Filme: Erklärung des Regisseurs Frank Beyer in Berlin, *Der Morgen* (Berlin), 25 November 1989. Unnamed interviewer.

³³¹ Geiss, 'Es gibt nicht mehr', p. 56.

³³² The film scripted by Jurek Becker was the only DEFA film ever to be nominated for an Oscar. It also used comedy and fantasy in its tale about life in a Jewish ghetto in Eastern Europe. *Jakob der Lügner*, director Frank Beyer, 1975, co-production DEFA and GDR Television.

official sanctions, and was banned after a short run, apparently because its star Manfred Krug – who also plays Balla in *Spur der Steine* – was regarded as the ringleader of the protest action against the expulsion of songwriter Wolf Biermann. In an interview given shortly after the *Wende*, Beyer describes how his enthusiasm for the socialist utopia gave way to increasing scepticism about real existing socialism.³³³ After 1966 he was no longer actively involved in cultural politics and from 1976 – the year of the Biermann affair – he became an increasingly active opponent of the established cultural-political course. Unlike Horrath in *Spur der Steine*, who is saved from expulsion from the party ranks by a rather penitent area secretary, the director was finally thrown out of the party after accepting work from West German television following the suppression of his TV film *Geschlossene Gesellschaft*, but he continued making films sporadically in the GDR.³³⁴ Apparently, it was a conversation between Krug and Egon Krenz that finally led to the release of his 1966 production in 1989.³³⁵

Since the *Wende* the film-maker has offered various explanations for the banning of *Spur der Steine*. In 1997 he attributed the withdrawal of *Spur der Steine* to its revelation of the ideological splits within the SED, stating:

In diesem Film gibt es zwei verschiedene Parteisekretäre: dort gibt es den Horrath, einen vernünftigen Mann, der gewissermaßen den liberalen Flügel verkörpert und den Bleibtreu, den dogmatischen Parteisekretär. So, das war eigentlich der Tabubruch. Das ist zwar nicht diskutiert worden, aber das war der Hauptangriff letzten Endes. Deshalb hieß dieser

³³³ See Geiss, 'Es gibt nicht mehr', p. 55.

³³⁴ The party had made his continued membership dependent upon his terminating the contract, his dissociating himself from his film and his withdrawal of his name from the petition against the expulsion of Biermann. See Hans Günther Pflaum, *Frank Beyer Retrospektive*, ed. by Dr Bruno Fischli and Angelika Gitsche, trans. by Robert W. Rice (Munich: Goethe-Institut, 1996), p. 6.

³³⁵ Reid, p. 64.

Film partei- und staatsfeindlich, weil er versuchte die Widersprüche innerhalb der Partei darzustellen.³³⁶

Another reason that he cites is its attempt to bring to light the structures of interdependency inherent in Stalinist socialism that turned victims into offenders and offenders into victims. This tendency, Beyer says, also manifested itself in the behaviour of his colleagues at a party meeting held after the suppression of *Spur der Steine* when only one person – Konrad Wolf – was willing to speak out in support of the film and its director.³³⁷

Some scholars have speculated that it was probably a scene involving Balla that sealed its fate.³³⁸ In this scene naked workers drag a *VoPo* into a duckpond with them. Others believe the reason for the ban was more fundamental. East German film critic Rosemarie Rehahn, whose review of the original film premiere in 1966 was never allowed to appear, does not believe that the film was banned on the grounds of the skinny-dipping sequence, but because it clearly presented a vision of socialism that was quite at odds with that envisaged by the GDR's leadership. For her, the film encapsulates the dreams of those who believed that they could achieve a more humane society. She writes:

Wenn man Nachgeborenen berichten wollte, wie es gemeint war mit dieser, unserer so schwer zu erklärenden Republik, wie die Exoten ausgesehen haben, die Spaß daran hatten, sich gemeinsam fürs Gemeinsame zu schinden, denen es, gestreift noch von Krieg und Faschismus, ernst gewesen ist mit dem Anders-Werden, mit der Vision von einer menschlicheren

³³⁶ *Film als Heimat: Frank Beyer: Beobachtungen von Christian F. Trippe*, Deutsche Welle, directed by Christian F. Trippe, 1997.

³³⁷ See 'Verbotene Filme: Erklärung des Regisseurs Frank Beyer in Berlin', *Der Morgen* (Berlin), 25 November 1989, and Hans-Dieter Seidel, 'Auf steiniger Spur: Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag des Regisseurs Frank Beyer', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 May 1992.

³³⁸ See, for example, Reid, p. 66.

Gesellschaft, ich würde sie in Frank Beyers Film schicken, wenn nicht zum Regisseur selber [...].³³⁹

She presents *Spur der Steine* as proof of the betrayed idealism of her own and Beyer's generation.

Of the films that I have examined, *Spur der Steine* offers the most differentiated critique of the GDR system, even thematising the difficulties of reforming this system. The imaginary community of Schkona is represented as labouring under a rigid economic, political and social order that has been imposed from above, stifling productivity and creativity, curbing freedom and creating disaffection. Relations are characterised by conflict: between the workers and the party, between the workers and the building site management, between the party and the site management. The ranks of the workers, party and management are also riven with internal dissent. The issues of justice and humanity are pivotal. The echoes of the Western underline this theme, for many Westerns reflect on different senses of law and justice. Often there is the shift from an order in which power prevails in the shape of gun law or lynch law to a civil society in which laws limit this power and direct it to the good. Here a key negotiation is pursued between a collective doctrine underpinning the power of the party, and a need to refine and soften the workings of the law to take account of individual difference and the interpersonal sphere.

Although in *Spur der Steine*, in contrast to *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, the main female protagonist is not linked with any kind of father figure, the narrative is nonetheless highly gendered. The theme of justice and humanity is conveyed through the contrasting conceptions of several men about how the new socialist

³³⁹ Rosemarie Rehahn, 'Once upon a time ... *Spur der Steine* 1966', in *Regie: Frank Beyer*, ed. by Ralf Schenk (Berlin: Edition Hentrich/Film Museum Potsdam, 1995), pp. 190-195 (p. 191).

order should be regulated. Each has a different idea about the degree of severity with which the law should be imposed. The woman represents the moral agent who highlights the inhumanity of the party's administration of the law, and rejects the law's right to jurisdiction over matters of the heart. The discourse of justice and humanity is given dramatic colour by the device of a framework 'trial' within which two other 'trials' are conducted, so creating cross-reflections between the narrative levels that draw us in as spectators to judge the justice that is being meted out. As in the Western, conflicts are played out among men and 'justice' is meted out by them, but the film prefigures a softening of the workings of this male law thanks to Kati. However, while she helps the men overcome their divisions, her own difficulty in trying to be both sexual/maternal and an engineer is ultimately not addressed.

In *Spur der Steine* it is primarily masculinity that is once more problematized. Male division is a key problem, as I shall show in section one, and is having disastrous effects upon relations in the collective. Woman helps both reveal and heal these splits and divides. In its representation of the central male and female characters the film marks a transition to later DEFA films. On the one hand, Balla bears some resemblance to the rebel heroes of *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, and Kati, like the female characters in the aforementioned films, helps to integrate him into the system. On the other hand, Horrath has a certain similarity with increasingly conformist young male figures in later *Gegenwartsfilme* who are called into question by female outsider figures, like Heiner Carow's Paula in *Die Legende von Paul*

und Paula or Ric in Egon Günther's *Die Schlüssel*.³⁴⁰ While Kati is not, in terms of her social status at least, on the margins of GDR society, as the sole woman in a world of men she is clearly an outsider. Furthermore, her challenge, like that of these later characters, is linked in part to her sexuality and to her subjectivity. In section two, I shall argue that the contrasts between different locations at Schkona raise questions about forms of belonging and the balance between freedom and order, a conflict underlined by the Wild West coding of the building site. Furthermore, the preponderance of work space and marginalization of domestic space has the effect, whether intentional or not, of calling into question the balance between the individual and the collective, and the role of sexuality and reproduction. In the third section, I shall examine how the film narrative's interweaving of narrative present and past effectively turns the committee meeting on Horrath's fate into a general meditation on mistakes made in the past, and encourages the spectator also to take stock. The way that the 'trial' unfolds prefigures a reordering of relations between the individual and the collective. However, the absence of Kati from proceedings at which only men speak, and her departure with her baby from Schkona, unsettles the resolution.

Love, Labour and the Law: An Attempt at Reconciliation

Of the four films I have analysed *Spur der Steine* is perhaps the most figurally differentiated. It is at the same time the one which has the greatest preponderance of male characters. As in both *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* the basic figural constellation is triangular. However, in

³⁴⁰ *Die Legende von Paul und Paula*, director Heiner Carow, 1973.

contrast to the other two films the central female protagonist is positioned between two male rivals, rather than between a lover and a father figure. This relationship between the worker Hannes Balla, the engineer Kati Klee and the party official Werner Horrath is the central plot device for revealing the splits that fracture this society and for helping to overcome some of them. The young engineer acts both as a mediator and a source of tension between the men, but also leads each to fundamentally reassess their behaviour.

Both men have positive traits but they are also depicted as being divided. In both cases this division is partly linked to their concern with adhering to the prevailing codes and with retaining their position of power in their respective male 'groups'. As a result both men play parts, suggesting a split between appearance and reality in the wider society. This is shown to have serious consequences for the collective, fuelling conflict and disaffection. In contrast with the two men, the younger Kati, who is the only female character of any significance in Beyer's film, is associated with personal authenticity. Although she is a party member, she does not hold any position of power, and responds impulsively to people and situations in ways she feels to be right. The young engineer ultimately facilitates not only the bringing together of the two men, but also a readjustment of relations on the building site as a whole. Like the other works, the film depicts a resolution of the social conflict. However, it unsettles its own affirmative ending by having her leave. Horrath and Balla represent alternative fathers for her child, but Kati rejects both, deciding to start afresh elsewhere. In this section I shall analyse the three central characters in detail, beginning with Balla and ending with Kati, examining the gender coding of their roles in the narrative.

The worker-hero Balla is the character who dominates the action of *Spur der Steine*. Like the rebel teenager Peter in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* he reveals a fluid mix of functions; he is outlaw, cowboy and clown rolled into one. The conflict between the *Brigadier* and the building site authorities is depicted as a problem that is fundamentally threatening the order of the building site. The foreman's lack of respect for the powers that be is revealed within minutes of the opening of the film. In quick succession we see him pulling a policeman into a duckpond, ordering around the chief engineer Hesselbart and refusing to accept the authority of the new party representative Werner Horrath. Taking orders seems to threaten Balla's very sense of identity, but his men regard his word as law, initially at least. In Neutsch's novel he owes the strong backing from his *Brigade*, in part, to his ability to secure the best possible wages for them all. In the film the men's financial motivation is downplayed. The mainspring for their support for Balla is his irreverent attitude towards the building site management and the party, and his own – at times – rather relaxed way of maintaining order in the work team. Balla's refusal to follow orders and his possession of a strong power base lead the area party secretary Hermann Jansen and the building site manager Richard Trutmann to view him as a threatening counter-authority in Schkona.

Yet Beyer clearly intended Balla to be viewed sympathetically by the audience, endowing him with a quick wit and the gift of the gab. As the director's comments in an interview about an earlier film indicate, he was clearly aware that humour promotes identification, observing that 'über das Lachen ein außerordentlich enger Kontakt des Zuschauers zum Filmhelden

hergestellt werden kann'.³⁴¹ The endowing of Balla with a certain populist masculinity, in part through his Wild West coding, seems to have been intended to attract the spectator's sympathies.³⁴² As a young film-maker, Beyer appears to have regarded Balla as being synonymous with social change. In an interview for *Junge Welt* he told the reporter of his one-time hopes that 'die Ballas – die unbequemen, schöpferischen Leute' could achieve the socialist ideal in the end.³⁴³ The *Brigadier* believes not only in hard play, but also in hard work. Although he does not have any time for socialism or even much attachment to the GDR, the Ballas are the highest achieving work team on the building site. Unlike Neutsch's novel which emphasises Balla's financial reasons for exceeding the work quota, in Beyer's film both his productivity and his rebelliousness are primarily represented as an expression of his masculinity.

His disdain for the representatives of the authorities on the building site is partly motivated by their divergence from his notions of what a man should be. He has no time for the party. In his eyes men's work is about getting your hands dirty, and about doing rather than talking. He has no respect for the passive resignation of the engineer Hesselbart, or for Trutmann's professional incompetence and his cowardly unwillingness to question orders from above. He loathes Horrath's Stalinist deputy Bleibtreu and reveals a basic mistrust of the white-collar workers, such as chief engineer Hesselbart and the young works' secretary himself. Horrath only begins to move up in the foreman's estimation when he mucks in with the others as they are toiling outside in the

³⁴¹ 'Interview mit Frank Beyer', *Forum*, 1 January 1964. Unnamed interviewer.

³⁴² On populist masculinity and the representation of work in *Spur der Steine*, see Karen Ruoff Kramer, 'Representations of Work in the Forbidden DEFA films', in *DEFA East German Cinema 1946-1992*, ed. by Seán Allan and John Sandford (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1999), pp. 131-145 (p. 137ff.).

³⁴³ René Römer, "'Ich benutze das Wort Kollektivschuld nicht'", *Junge Welt* (Berlin), 12 October 1991, p. 14.

rain. The overly-constraining, inflexible command economy is depicted almost as an emasculating force, and one which would profit from some aspects of Balla's masculinity.

A more ambivalent aspect of Balla's character is his predatory sexuality. Initially, the foreman's conduct towards Kati shows the kind of macho bravado that we see him display in the very first flashback sequence, when he approaches a group of women workers and lifts up one of them, grabbing her by her breasts. Similarly Balla and his men show little respect for Kati upon their first meeting, carrying her kicking and screaming onto a hijacked digger truck. A little later Balla attempts to force a kiss upon her after she dances with him at the works' celebrations of the GDR's tenth anniversary. In this respect Balla resembles the work-mad, but hopelessly undisciplined, and sexually unrestrained shaft driver Schalk, in Martin Hellberg's 1953 film *Das kleine und das große Glück*.³⁴⁴ In both cases a link is suggested between male energy and a lack of sexual restraint, and in both cases this latter drive must first be curbed before they can be integrated into the collective.

Like Dieter in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* and Peter in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, this rebel, too, has to undergo a learning process within the film. While his rebelliousness is represented as something necessary in the overly disciplined society that we encounter at the start of *Spur der Steine*, it is also depicted as something that must be reined in if it is not to threaten the very existence of the system. Furthermore, his undisciplined energy is represented as a potentially creative and destructive force, which needs to be channelled. In addition, Balla's bond of allegiance to his *Brigade*, like Dieter's association

³⁴⁴ Similarly in Christa Wolf's novel *Der geteilte Himmel* a link is made between physical power and womanising through the figure of Kuhn. Konrad Wolf's film merely visually hints at this link in a mildly suggestive scene in which Kuhn displays to Rita how handy he is with his drill.

with the crowd from the street and Peter's association with the disreputable Weimar gang, must also be broken in order for him to become an integrated member of society. Nevertheless, there is something of a shift of emphasis here in favour of Balla and against the nature of the order that he rebels against.

Kati is instrumental in Balla's development. It is to her that he first admits that most of this macho bluster is a performance intended to secure the continued support of his men, and to her that he begins to show his more sensitive side. More and more, he responds to her appeals for help at work, even though he realises that this means risking his position of power in his *Brigade*. Like Schalk in the earlier film, Balla is transformed from macho boor to considerate suitor, and finally he even steps in and appears in the paternal position instead of Horrath, bringing flowers to the new mother in the maternity ward and being mistaken twice for the father. His niceness is further strengthened by his wistful remark that he wishes her baby were a girl rather than a boy, and later by his restraint when Kati and he go away on work business together and finally she appears to want to sleep with him. However, this character development does not yet mark the end of the story, for his feelings for Kati bring him further into conflict with the party when he discovers for certain that it is the works' party secretary who has fathered her child.

Balla's relationship with the party secretary is characterised by swings of attraction and repulsion. His initial rejection of the man who challenges his position on the building site gives way to a begrudging admiration for the way that Horrath pursues his ideological goals at work. This admiration begins to wane, as he realises that Horrath is hushing up an extramarital affair with Kati and reneging on his personal responsibilities. For Balla, this robs Horrath of

credibility both as an authority figure and as a person. In a key dialogue between the two men Balla's unsteady commitment at work is linked to Horrath's flawed administration of power and his lack of personal authenticity. When the foreman returns to the building site after a three-day bender, Horrath asks the foreman: 'Wer bist du eigentlich? Der, der mit den Händen aufbaut, oder der, der mit dem Arsch alles wieder einreißt?' Yet the party secretary's divisions go far deeper than those of the rebel. This point is not lost on Balla, who retorts: 'Du bist nämlich auch doppelt, Horrath. Und welcher bist du? Der, der den Kopp hält und verantwortet was er macht, oder der andere?' Only after Horrath finally confesses that he has been having an illicit affair with Kati, and comes clean, first to his wife and then to the party, do relations between the two men improve. After Horrath is dismissed from his party post, the power relationship between the two men is reversed, for Balla offers the down-and-out shelter and a job in his *Brigade*.

Both men overcome their divisions in the course of the narrative and are integrated into the re-ordered collective. The *Brigadier* clearly signals the relinquishment of his outlaw status when, rather than taking the law into his own hands, he calls in the police to deal with ex-*Brigade* member Bolbig's attack upon the Hauptmann. Balla's visit to area party secretary Jansen to plead on behalf of Horrath also marks a willingness to co-operate with the party, but in contrast to Neutsch's novel, the worker does not make any explicit conversion to socialism. As is the case with Peter in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and to some extent with Dieter in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, Balla's integration is linked closely to his feelings of sexual attraction and emotional attachment to a woman. Like Anne in Vogel's film, Kati also represents values that are depicted as socially valuable, which also fuel his attraction. By contrast

with Balla, Horrath, the law-giver, gradually runs into trouble with the law before being rehabilitated. But his plot trajectory, too, is closely linked with his relationship to Kati.

Initially, the party secretary is depicted in a predominantly positive light, and is offset positively against his pernicious deputy whose 'redender Name' Bleibtreu indicates his party loyalist stance and dogmatic, hardline character. Horrath, like Balla, despite his very different physique and his very different social function, is associated with a number of traits that are typically regarded as masculine: energy, drive and determination. As the critic Rosemarie Rehahn comments: 'Körperlich stellt der neue Parteisekretär, verglichen mit dem Mannsbild Balla, eher eine halbe Portion dar, als Funktionär ist er ein ganzer Kerl, ein Mutmacher mit sensiblem, ironisch gebrochenem Intellekt und selbstloser Energie.'³⁴⁵ It is Horrath's hands-on, go-ahead approach that begins to win him the foreman's approval. The young party secretary also has some traits that Balla does not share, namely idealism, zeal and vision, which also start to earn him the secret respect and envy of the foreman. Horrath is depicted as a passionately committed party member, who recognises the need for reform.

As a law-giver the young party secretary advocates a more tolerant, less punitive approach than either the area party secretary, Jansen, or the construction site manager Trutman. When the *Brigadier* is threatened with prosecution for pulling the *VoPo* into the duck pond, the new works' party secretary rejects Trutmann's demand for his arrest. Even after Balla threatens him with a broken chairleg at the tenth anniversary celebrations, he argues against turning him off the building site, citing the words of Makarenko (a

³⁴⁵ Rehahn, 'Once upon', pp. 192-193.

progressive Soviet pedagogue) to Jansen to support his strategy. Horrath, as Rehahn observes, favours 'ein neues freisinniges Miteinander unterschiedlichster schöpferischer Kräfte', but the workers' disaffection, the rigid, hierarchical system of planning and management at the building site, and party discipline stand in his way.³⁴⁶ On his own authority, he orders the workers to contravene the plan when he realises that it is blocking progress at the building site. Ultimately, his attempts to effect change lead him into conflict with the party.

Despite his apparent idealism, a crack becomes increasingly visible between how Horrath acts himself and the law that he espouses. He is furious at being reprimanded by Jansen for failing to adhere to the plan, but punishes the Ballas when they infringe building site regulations for similar reasons to his own, even though he concedes his actions reveal a certain hypocrisy. He recognises the flaws in the way the system works, commenting: 'Naive geradeaus Gerechtigkeit. Wir loben und tadeln nach Nutzen und Notwendigkeit.' However, he defends this approach when Kati questions its necessity. Horrath does not seem to realise the importance of acting in a way that can be subjectively perceived as just. Furthermore, the gap between the law that he administers and the way he acts himself pertains not only to his professional behaviour, but also to his sexual conduct. He hushes up his extramarital affair with the young engineer, in part because he knows that revealing the fact would cost him his job. Yet at the same time, he admits to Kati that he, too, would throw men off the building site for having an affair because of the ill effects on discipline. Although he becomes increasingly aware of the pain that Kati is suffering, he still does not make their relationship

³⁴⁶ Rehahn, 'Once upon', p. 193.

public. The strivings of the party to achieve its goals are shown to promote not only hypocrisy, but also callousness, in both the private and the public sphere.

Horrath's double life leads to an increasing loss of personal authenticity. In the sequence in which he dismisses Trutmann his hypocrisy reaches a high-point. He lambasts the manager for his failure to be honest with the collective, even though he himself is doggedly concealing his affair with Kati despite the full-scale public inquiry to find out who is the father of her child. The episode also underlines just how far his behaviour has deviated from the reform socialism that he was preaching when he first arrived at the building site. While it is Hesselbart who urges Horrath to sack the manager because his incompetence is endangering progress, and Balla later expresses understanding for the move, Kati's reaction causes us to question the way that the party secretary executes this task, as well as the other men's more pragmatic approach. Horrath's remorseless authoritarianism reveals the extent to which he is still entrapped in Stalinist structures of thought and behaviour. Acting single-handedly as prosecutor, judge and jury, but speaking in the name of the people, he browbeats and hectors Trutmann before finally dismissing him in the sequence which resembles a show trial. The figure of Horrath is used to demonstrate that the party is an organisation losing sight of individual human beings in its pursuit of a notional higher goal. Furthermore, the problems at Schkona suggest that party ideology is not capable of dealing with the complexity of interpersonal relations.

The party secretary's illicit love for Kati leads to a major conflict between his professional aims and political principles and his private feelings and emotional obligations. His explanation to Balla for his behaviour towards his lover links this strict moral code with the GDR's Stalinist era:

Werner: Ich bin 1950 in die Partei eingetreten. Ich hatte sehr wenig Lebenserfahrungen. Je jünger man ist, desto besser weiß man über alles Bescheid, was gut ist und was schlecht. Wie, zum Beispiel, ein Kommunist beschaffen sein muß, geradlinig und sauber auch in seinem Privatleben. Seine Gefühle muß er beherrschen.

Balla: Das ist in Ordnung. Sollte heute auch noch so sein.

Werner: Ja, aber wir haben es uns einfach gemacht. Zu einfach. Ich meine, wenn etwas bei jemandem nicht in Ordnung war, war es in Ordnung gebracht durch Beschluß. Ob ein verheirateter Mann eine andere Frau liebte, oder bloß mal fremdging, war kein Unterschied. War beides unmoralischer Lebenswandel. Und wenn ein Genosse in dem Punkt anfällig war, dann fing man auch ansonsten an seiner Haltung zu zweifeln.

Balla: Und seit wann bist du schlauer geworden?

Werner: Seit ich plötzlich der Betroffene bin und weiß, daß ich das ganz allein machen muß, daß Beschlüsse gar nichts ändern, gar nichts helfen.

In *Spur der Steine* Horrath comes to see the shortcomings of this moral code and, during the proceedings originally designed to expel him from the SED, the other party members also come to recognise its flaws. In the early years of the GDR, party members who committed adultery were very likely to be subjected to disciplinary measures, and the film indicates that the party's sexual moral code, just like its plan for the economy, is too rigid.³⁴⁷

This is not just depicted as a world where too much emphasis is being put on public endeavour at the expense of private relationships, rather the film shows that the society in Schkona, and by implication in the GDR, is being deformed because of the imposition of a system with insufficient regard for the individual. Kati reveals that the male-dominated system is constructed around

³⁴⁷ In the 1950s and early 1960s the leadership also propagated a puritanical ethos in the wider population. The ninth commandment of party chairman Walter Ulbricht's 'Zehn Gebote der sozialistischen Moral', announced in July 1958, exhorted 'Du sollst sauber und anständig leben und deine Familie achten'. See Gert-Joachim Glaeßner, 'Selbstinszenierung von Partei und Staat', in *Parteiauftrag: Ein Neues Deutschland: Bilder, Rituale und Symbole der frühen DDR*, ed. by Dieter Vorsteher (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 1996), pp. 20-39 (p. 37).

an impoverished, overly rational notion of the individual. She is associated with a radically subjective position. For her, the only valid consideration in her relationship with Horrath is their love for one another. Although she does not heed Horrath's initial warning to her that he is married and off-limits, we are not encouraged to judge her. Any potential ambivalence in Kati's unrestrained emotionality is largely passed over.³⁴⁸ When Horrath explains to her that he will be dismissed if their affair becomes common knowledge before he divorces Marianne, she protests: 'Aber du bist doch kein Verbrecher. Deine Gefühle haben sich geändert.' His response: 'Wie willst du Gefühle untersuchen?' suggests the system cannot deal with non-quantifiable factors. At the hearing into her child's paternity, Kati calls into question the state's right to any kind of jurisdiction over matters concerning love and sexuality by resisting pressure from the party to reveal the identity of her child's father.³⁴⁹ While the young engineer does not want to have to keep her relationship with Horrath secret, she also does not want to be forced to talk about her sexual activities. Before the hearing, Kati forthrightly rejects Werner's advice to confess all at the proceedings with the words: 'Ich lasse mich nicht ausziehen.' While she thus defends the right to some privacy in the sexual realm, she also believes in the need for openness and honesty in public governance.

At the workplace the young engineer functions as the chief moral agent. Despite being treated badly by Trutmann, Kati is the only person to stand up and defend him at the meeting at which Horrath dismisses the construction site

³⁴⁸ In an earlier version of the film script Horrath expresses at some length his concern about the effect the news of the affair will have upon his wife, while the young engineer urges him to leave her nonetheless. Passages such as these that might have prompted us to question her behaviour were cut from the final film version. For details of the earlier dialogue see, 'Spur der Steine', Script: Karl Georg Egel and Frank Beyer, Director: Frank Beyer, Camera: Günter Marczinkowski, Set: Harald Horn, unpublished script of 14 January 1965, VEB DEFA, Studio für Spielfilme, Potsdam-Babelsberg, p. 150.

³⁴⁹ Similarly, during the party proceedings against Horrath Balla challenges this prerogative by refusing to give an account of his trip with Kati to Berlin in which they almost ended up in bed.

manager from his job. She calls for him to show compassion to Trutmann on the basis that he has at least tried to make a clean breast of things, asserting: 'Wer versucht ehrlich zu sein, dem muß man eine Chance geben.' She is a party member and a firm believer in socialism, but is unconstrained by tactical or pragmatic considerations. She stands up for humanistic values and is a model of integrity. Despite her own poor treatment by Trutmann, she is unwilling to tolerate this treatment of him, especially by a man who is not living by the standards that he is enforcing. The men, by contrast, seem concerned with retaining their positions of power in their respective groups, or are constrained in public by their adherence to the spoken or unspoken rules of the antagonistic male collectives to which they belong. Later, when conditions deteriorate at the building site, Kati goes to the newspapers, a deed for which she is excoriated by the Stalinist Bleibtreu and shunned by Horrath, but clearly respected by Balla. Once more she is depicted as a force for social openness.

Spur der Steine, like *Der geteilte Himmel*, is rather paradoxical in its depiction of its central female figure. Like Rita during her holiday job at the carriage works in *Der geteilte Himmel*, Kati is the only female working in an otherwise exclusively male environment. As the lone female engineer, Kati reveals both the potential professional opportunities open to women in the GDR and the relative rarity of women actually working in traditional male professions. Furthermore, Beyer's film makes no attempt to conceal the prejudice that she encounters. The sexist treatment that Kati is forced to endure comes from both the men and managers alike. Yet although the film shows the problems of women's emancipation at the workplace, I would argue Kati's role in the film is not primarily related to her professional function as an engineer, but rather to her relationship with the two male characters and her gender-

distinct Otherness, which leads them to reassess their behaviour and the character of the system in general.

Kati can be regarded as something of a transitional character when viewed in terms of the dominant representations of female figures in the *Gegenwartsfilm*. Her association with humanistic values lends her a resemblance to characters such as Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel* and Anne in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*. As with these other female figures, Kati is the youngest of the film's central characters and these traits are implicitly connected with her youth as well as her gender. She acts as a catalyst, triggering change in the male characters. In contrast to the other female figures in the films I have analysed, her values are not linked with the state or system by her relationship with an older father figure, and the subsidiary plotline in Neutsch's novel that traces Kati's break and reconciliation with her father, a senior member of the party, is omitted. Furthermore, while bringing the two main male protagonists together, she rejects both of them as her partner and breaks off her links with the collective at Schkona. Kati is a more sexualised figure than her literary counterpart and either Rita or Anne, whose youth is synonymous with a certain sexual innocence or inexperience.

In Neutsch's novel the young engineer is not a virgin, but has only slept with one man and on only one occasion before meeting Horrath. Although the film does not reveal anything of her sexual history, it lends Kati a rather more flirtatious aspect in her relations both with Balla and the party secretary than in the novel. For example, she is depicted as very clearly exploiting her feminine charms in an attempt to mediate between the two men. At the works' party to celebrate the GDR's tenth anniversary, Kati stops Balla, who is armed with a broken chairleg, attacking Horrath. With eyelashes aflutter, she squeezes

herself between the two men and persuades the *Brigadier* to dance. Here, too, Kati could be said to be deliberately performing a particular gender role, just as Balla does. In earlier DEFA films, good women frequently help integrate disaffected, individualistic or isolated male characters into the social order. Increasingly, in the 1970s onwards, in films like Carow's *Die Legende von Paul und Paula*, Ralf Kirsten's *Eine Pyramide für mich*, Erwin Stranka's *Sabine Wulff* and Konrad Wolf's *Solo Sunny*, sexually active females challenge the mores of the existing, male-dominated system and frequently remain outsiders. While Kati's relationship with Balla has similarities with those of the films from the earlier era, her relationship with Horrath resembles the unhappy partnerships in some of these later films. Furthermore, as in Carow's film, the emotionality and the fecundity of the leading female protagonist challenge the system's all-controlling urge, but simultaneously reinforce stereotypes associating women with emotion and biology.

The ending of *Spur der Steine* is left, like *Der geteilte Himmel*, without a romantic resolution. On the one hand, Kati's decision that she cannot form a relationship with either Balla or Horrath reveals deficiencies in the men and in the different types of paternal law with which they are associated. While Balla is a kind and considerate suitor, a man who provides her with a proper home and would protect her and her child, he is not ideologically committed to the socialist project and lacks vision. By contrast, Horrath has put the future of the collective project first and lost sight of her needs, and she feels betrayed. As I shall explore in more depth at the end of the chapter this lends ambiguity to the film's closure. In the next section I shall explore how the contradictions and tensions in Schkona are reflected in the representation of space.

The Inner Frontier

Of the four films I have analysed, *Spur der Steine* makes the fewest references to the West – or to West Germany at least. The action largely takes place at the construction site at Schkona, a fictional location modelled on East Germany's Leuna plant, but the film's partial Wild West coding distances it a little from prosaic GDR reality, imparting the feel of an outpost. The building site was a popular topos in GDR film, being, as Andrea Rinke notes, a useful metaphor for the shaping of the socialist nation.³⁵⁰ Here in *Spur der Steine*, the combination of building site setting and Western allusions enables Schkona to function at one and the same time as a cipher for the GDR and as a place where the norms of GDR society are not yet fully in operation.

Unlike *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, which primarily identifies the East with a residential area, the site and the committee room are the central spaces in *Spur der Steine*. The locations in Beyer's film contrast strikingly: the austere, at times claustrophobic, at times echoing authoritarian committee rooms and offices are set against the wide, open, outdoor setting of the building site and the anarchy of the pub. The opposition between the spaces in which Balla's men predominate and those where the party is in charge is underlined by the Western coding of the former. All contrast, in turn, with the cosy intimacy of Kati's old-fashioned room, which, unlike the men's makeshift accommodation at the plant, is situated in the nearby town.

The manner in which this community is depicted raises questions about the balance of freedom and order and about different forms of belonging and

³⁵⁰ As Andrea Rinke points out the construction site is used as a metaphor for the shaping of the new socialist country in many DEFA films, see 'From Models to Misfits: Women in DEFA Films of the 1970s and 1980s', in Allan and Sandford, pp. 183-203 (p. 189).

community. The ending leaves us with an image of male unity and solidarity that is focused around the committee room. This image of the re-formed workplace collective is, however, problematised by being set against the image of Kati's empty room. Like the first depictions of Manfred's flat in *Der geteilte Himmel*, the young engineer's home exudes more individuality and warmth than any other location in the film. While a number of issues at the workplace are resolved, the relationship of public to private, space for the individual and the place of women in this imagined community remain unclear. The relations of production have been put in order, but reproduction has been excluded from the equation.

The popularity of the building site topos in DEFA film history reflects the centrality of work in East German society and idea of the GDR as a new state under construction.³⁵¹ Early films, such as *Das kleine und das große Glück*, which depicts the trials and tribulations of a *Jugendbrigade* endeavouring to complete their new road in time, and *Der Roman einer jungen Ehe*, which celebrates the building of the Stalinallee, are steeped in *Aufbau* pathos. Later films like *Unser kurzes Leben* and *Die Architekten* use the theme of building and architecture radically to call into question the development of the GDR.³⁵² In *Spur der Steine* the building site at Schkona serves, too, as a critical cipher for the state, as the sequence depicting the new party secretary Horrath's arrival underlines. One of the very first sequences shows the foundations of a new industrial plant being blown up. In explanation, the new party secretary is told that the plans issued by 'die da oben' were wrong and

³⁵¹ The building site also features in *Beschreibung eines Sommers*, director Ralf Kirsten, 1963, *Kennen Sie Urban?*, director Ingrid Reschke, 1971, and *Eine Pyramide für mich*, director Ralf Kirsten, 1975, and also appears, for example, as a motif in *Wo der Zug nicht lange hält*, director Joachim Hasler, 1960, and, as I have mentioned, in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*.

³⁵² *Unser kurzes Leben*, director Lothar Warneke, 1981; *Die Architekten*, director Peter Kahane, 1990.

that the workers on the ground will be forced to make them good. The implication is that the state's hierarchical structure is flawed and that it will be necessary to correct fundamentals.

At the same time the construction site is also put at one remove from the viewers' reality. The sequence showing Kati's arrival exemplifies the manner in which the film displaces or dislocates Schkona. The young engineer's taxi driver informs her that they have come to the end of the world as he drops her off at the edge of the site, having run out of road. The embryonic industrial complex is represented as somewhere that is geographically out-of-the-way, far from the centres of state authority and somewhere the rules and norms of the rest of society are, as we soon come to see, only partially in force. This sense of dislocation is further emphasised by Beyer's Wild West coding of the building site. Schkona is depicted as a frontier outpost, a liminal area in which basic social values are under negotiation.

By incorporating allusions to one of the most American genres of all into a film based around a fictional East German building site, Beyer was fusing two different film traditions, one established and one fledgling, dealing with the question of national identity. The combination of the two forms lent colour and humour to what otherwise might have been perceived as a drab subject. The enthusiasm of GDR audiences for watching films about the workplace in their spare time was not limitless, as newspaper readers' letters had already indicated a decade earlier. The Wild West coding also allowed Beyer, in his film adaptation, to deepen and enrich the thematic range of Neutsch's novel. Whereas cultural politicians expected productivity and the unity of the socialist collective to be the central concerns of the socialist

Gegenwartsfilm, quite different issues are identified with the Western. One influential critic of the genre, Jim Kitses, argues that the Western's stories work through an opposition between wilderness and civilisation central to America's national consciousness, and has described it as being crucially linked to the American problem of national identity.³⁵³ Schkona, like the Wild West, is a place of antitheses, rather than unity. Law and order vie with freedom and anarchy, public contrasts with private, law is set in opposition to humanity and civilisation to nature.

The Western coding in *Spur der Steine* is restricted to the spaces associated above all with Balla and his men. The building site's sandy terrain and its open expanses give it a decidedly frontier feel, and the construction workers' bulldozers look like stagecoaches. The pubs, too, are designed to recall saloon bars in the Wild West. The Ballas, with their traditional carpenter outfits consisting of waistcoats, trousers, wide-brimmed hat and tool 'holsters', are clearly intended to look like cowboys. As Karen Ruoff Kramer observes, one effect of this coding is to lend a certain glamour to the men and their work, for the Western coding of the workplace endows it with populist masculinity. However she argues that, unlike *Spur der Steine*, '[c]owboy films are not about the work of riding the range, but its mythic freedom'. In my opinion, Beyer's film is about both work and freedom.³⁵⁴ The Western coding of the building site and the pubs where the men spend their free time imparts a degree of freedom to these spaces that is lacking from the other work and leisure-time locations.³⁵⁵

³⁵³ Jim Kitses, *Horizons West* (London: Secker and Warburg/BFI, 1969)

³⁵⁴ Kramer, p. 137.

³⁵⁵ The building site is not the only space in which the law is revealed to be too rigid. When the young engineer is at the dance hall with Balla, her high heel snaps and she is ordered off the dance floor because dancing without shoes is not permitted. This is a neat reversal of Kati's

At the same time there is an element of bathos effected by the parallel. A good portion of the film's comedy and its critique derives from the disparity between the legendary Wild West and the industrial, workaday East, while *The Magnificent Seven*, the Western that Beyer most explicitly alludes to in his film, is itself rather tongue-in-cheek. It was, as Reid observes, a parody of *The Seven Samurai*, which was originally set in sixteenth-century Japan.³⁵⁶ One of the most obvious visual allusions to *The Magnificent Seven* occurs in one of the first sequences of the film, as Balla and his band of men march in.³⁵⁷ Armed with pop-a-top beer bottles, rather than Smith and Wessons, and wearing traditional carpenters' costumes not cowboy leathers, they seem more like posturing wannabes than real tough guys. The film gently pokes fun at the outlaws as well as the law. These men risk being run out of town, not for drawing their guns, but for dropping their trousers!

Of course the men's behaviour is not always restricted to such harmless antics as skinny-dipping in the town's duckpond. But then the critique of the authorities is also not always as gentle as in these first sequences. While, as Kramer points out, 'Balla's collective walks a thin line between being a somewhat disorderly posse and a band of partially domesticated outlaws', only Bolbig and his sidekick Galonski are vilified in the film, and the *Brigadier* breaks with them as their behaviour starts to turn truly ugly.³⁵⁸ Much of the Ballas' more challenging behaviour is shown to result from the overly restrictive nature of the law, which is underlined visually. The committee room sequences, which I shall discuss in more depth in the next section, have a

arrival at the building site when she is forced to remove her high heels and go barefoot, and shows that Kati is a crossover character, who signifies both nature and civilisation.

³⁵⁶ *The Seven Samurai*, director Akira Kurosawa, 1954.

³⁵⁷ Reid, p. 64.

³⁵⁸ Kramer, p. 137.

stifling quality that is emphasised by the long takes and the static *mise-en-scène*. In the framework 'trial', the closely framed shots of the committee members and the deep focus frames looking down the long committee table, on the one hand, invite us, as it were, to participate in the discussion, though at times their visually restricted nature is almost claustrophobic. Furthermore, the party functionaries' offices have a clinical orderliness that also contrasts greatly with the other locations. The functionality of Horrath's and Jansen's rooms equipped with telephones and radios and furnished with sober office furniture links them with the forces of modernity and rationality, but, as in all of the preceding films, modernity has a certain ambivalent status in *Spur der Steine*. The modern décor makes the spaces seem somewhat cold and impersonal, and the clean, clear lines promote an impression of emptiness and isolation. Furthermore, the earnestness of the officials' conversations contrasts unfavourably with the building workers' humour, spontaneity, *joie de vivre* and camaraderie.

The building site, the pub, the committee rooms and the functionaries' offices nevertheless do have one thing in common. All the locations are primarily associated with men. Kati is frequently the only woman in these spaces. Occasionally, there is another token woman present as, for example, in the young engineer's hearing, or in Horrath's 'trial' where Kati does not appear. Given the emphasis upon women's equality in the GDR, this is not what one might expect of a GDR *Gegenwartsfilm*, although, as I have shown in *Der geteilte Himmel*, it is certainly not without precedent. Westerns, on the other hand, are widely acknowledged to be one of the most macho of genres. When women do appear outside the homestead, they are frequently associated either with illicit sexuality and linked with the whorehouse, or with a

conceptual complex perhaps best called civilisation and linked with social institutions like the school or the church. Kati, as I argue in section one, also plays a civilising function in this imagined community but she has no institutional base from which she can operate. Yet unlike the men, she does have a space that merits the name home.

Upon first sight Horrath declares her old-fashioned room, procured for her by Balla, to be 'ein ganz häßliches Zimmer', but with its clutter of personal effects it has a warmth, character and history that is absent from the other locations. Kati's rocking chair has a Wild Western touch and, like Anne's *Dornröschentuhl*, symbolises home. The intimacy Horrath and Kati enjoy here contrasts with the sense of growing distance between Horrath and his wife in their emphatically modern flat in Rostock. Although this room in part evokes the tastes of a bygone age, Frau Schicketanz, Kati's landlady, gives the young engineer permission to change things to suit her own taste, offering her the space to express her own individuality. There is no sense here of the generational conflict that characterises the father-son relationships in the other films. Frau Schicketanz is quite unfazed and accepting of Kati's divergent tastes, commenting: 'Die Jugend heute hat eben einen ganz anderen Geschmack.' Beyer's film foregrounds the sentimental bond between Frau Schicketanz and Kati, whose relationship in Neutsch's novel is far from harmonious.³⁵⁹

The old landlady's openness also contrasts with the narrow-mindedness of the men in authority on the building site. She immediately offers Kati a second set of keys for Horrath. Unlike the men at the building site she is not

³⁵⁹ Reid also makes this point about the contrast between Neutsch's landlady and Beyer's Schicketanz. See Reid, p. 64.

judgmental towards Kati when she finds out that she is pregnant and begins to suspect her lover is a married man, but is purely concerned about Kati's wellbeing. After having a drop of *Eierlikör* she tells Balla maybe a little bit more than she should about her tenant's private life, but she is far removed from the *Blockwartin*-type figure with the shady past depicted in Neutsch's novel. The net curtains that adorn her flat seem there to keep out prying eyes rather than to allow the old lady slyly to observe and possibly inform on her environment. Horrath, nevertheless, fears he will be observed visiting Kati, and the couple leave town, taking off by car into the surrounding countryside, like Manfred and Rita, or by train, in order to be alone. The depiction of space in *Spur der Steine* underlines the absence of private space in this community and, by extension, in the GDR. Furthermore, the peripheralization of domestic space in the film narrative – Horrath's family home is in Rostock, and Kati's room is situated in the nearby town – indicates its subsidiarity in relation to the collective project.

While Kati, her landlady Frau Schicketanz, and Horrath's wife and child are associated with more conventional domestic spaces, the men do not have proper homes to go to. The Ballas live in rather unprepossessing dormitory accommodation on site, and Horrath sleeps in his office. The carpenters' domestic situation is implicitly linked to the peripatetic nature of construction work. Horrath's situation is linked with his wife's own career plans and the shortage of living accommodation, a perennial problem in the GDR that is explicitly alluded to in the film. She doesn't want to leave Rostock before she has completed her professional exams and before they have found a flat big enough for the family. Both Balla and Horrath have given up their homes for work. On the one hand, we seem to be intended to regard their

endurance of this hardship as something ennobling. Yet, on the other, such domestic difficulties are also problematized in the film. And in the dialogue between Balla and Hauptmann, who are spending Christmas together in their barracks because they have no family to go to, this sense of homelessness is given a national dimension.³⁶⁰

Hauptmann and Balla speak about Nazism and the subsequent division of Germany, and from their conversation it is clear that neither man feels truly at home in the new society. Balla even implicitly suggests that there is not much difference between East and West. During an earlier dialogue when Kati is still living in makeshift accommodation on the building site and Balla is still waging war with Horrath, she attempts to remind him of the socialist project, asking: 'Wo leben Sie?' He answers: 'Nicht in so einem vergammelten Mauseloch, wie Sie.' His wilful misunderstanding of her question also indicates his lack of any sense of belonging to a greater whole, evoking Peter's dialogues with Anne in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* about his lack of attachment to the GDR. It is Kati, just as it is Anne, who helps to integrate Balla into the collective during the course of the narrative. Yet the problematic nature of a work collective as a cipher for national belonging or community is underlined by Kati's departure and the poignant sight of her empty room. Simultaneously, the narrative also reinforces traditional associations between men and the public sphere and women and private space. It is an interesting deviation from the Western that *Spur der Steine* ends with the integration of all the male characters into an adjusted predominantly male order and not, as is frequently the case in the US genre, with a lone male riding off onto the range.

³⁶⁰ In Neutsch's film there is a plot strand focused around Balla's ageing parents, their unwillingness to join the collective farm, and his disinclination to step in and take over its running.

Stalinism on Trial

The narrative of *Spur der Steine* is not concerned with attempting to insert the GDR in a historical tradition or reckoning with the anti-fascist/Nazi past. Apart from area secretary Jansen's elliptical allusion to his role as an anti-fascist fighter in the Nazi period and the reference to Hauptmann's Nazi past, the pre-story-time in *Spur der Steine* does not pre-date the beginnings of the GDR. Instead, the film represents an attempt to reckon with the legacy of the recent past. As I have stated in the chapter introduction, Beyer himself saw *Spur der Steine* as an attempt to bring to light the structures of Stalinist socialism. In this section, I shall examine how the retrospective narrative structure promotes this critical focus, while also seeking to prefigure some sort of solution to the problems that it identifies. But I shall also consider how the ending problematizes this new beginning and hence the relationship to the future.

Using the ongoing one-day party proceedings against Horrath as a narrative framework, the film flashes back over and over again to events at the building site in Schkona that began with Kati and Horrath's arrival and ended with his dismissal from the post of works' party secretary and his invitation to appear before a party tribunal. As Reid observes, 'the flashback technique has the effect of confronting the spectator again and again with the mistakes of the past'.³⁶¹ By contrast, the novel's linear narrative structure and preterite tense distances it somewhat from the readers' reality. It is also more clearly demarcated with relation to historical time than the film. The literary text begins in 1959 during the international conference of foreign ministers from the United States, United Kingdom, France and Soviet Union in Geneva, and

³⁶¹ Reid, p. 65.

ends in the summer of 1961, and ‘presents an implicit justification of the “Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung”’.³⁶² In Beyer’s film, the relative absence of concrete time references, in combination with its retrospective narrative and the perpetual present of the filmic medium, lends greater immediacy to both narrative past and narrative present. In *Spur der Steine*, the works’ social event at Schkona to mark the tenth anniversary celebrations of the GDR, one of the earlier flashbacks, provides the only clear historical time reference. Anniversaries tend to have the effect of triggering thoughts about the extent of the achievements made within the elapsed period. By implication, the ‘trial’ becomes a review into the state of development of the GDR.

We are drawn into the narrative, invited to judge this narrative past along with the committee members. Whereas, as Reid notes, there is an omniscient narrator who occasionally steps in to relativise the characters’ more directly critical statements in Neutsch’s novel, there is nothing of the kind in Beyer’s film version.³⁶³ The narrative of *Spur der Steine* is so structured that flashback sequences are introduced in response to questions posed during the proceedings in the narrative present. The debate which develops between committee members at the narrative present level is echoed in the implied audience/film relation. The inquiry against Horrath is quickly widened in scope. It turns into an inquiry into the nature of law and justice, as well as the state of inter-personal relations in the collective. The roles that the key committee members played in the events are scrutinised along with the party secretary’s behaviour. Bleibtreu’s high-handed attempt to convict Horrath on the charges of immoral behaviour, ‘careerism’, and political and ideological

³⁶² Reid, p. 62.

³⁶³ Reid, pp. 62-63.

failure at the beginning of the proceeding is called into question by *Brigadier* Ziehmer and engineer Hesselbart. The manner in which the proceedings develop represents an attempt to address these problems within the collective at Schkona.

The two 'trials' within the trial, the party hearing against Kati to find out the paternity of her child and the works' meeting about Trutmann's professional performance as chief engineer, encourage the viewer to contrast and compare the way that these past hearings are staged with the way the committee proceedings are unfolding in the present narrative. Before I examine the development of the proceedings against Horrath in more depth, I would like to examine the two earlier inquiries that are both conducted by party officials. The first is headed by Bleibtreu, Horrath's dogmatic deputy, and the other by Horrath himself. Both clearly reveal the inhumane way justice is being administered, as well as a tension between the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective. Furthermore, in the case of the hearing against Kati, the question is raised about what the collective has the right to include within its power of jurisdiction.

Bleibtreu heads the earlier inquiry into the paternity of Kati's child. The positioning of Kati, at one end of the table, and the deputy works' secretary, at the other, emphasises the confrontational style of the meeting. Despite Horrath's reminder to the committee that they are meant to be holding a conversation with Katrin Klee and not staging a criminal investigation, the questioning is aggressive. Although Kati refuses to reveal the name of the father, the committee members, who are overwhelmingly male, continue to pressurise her. Her isolation and the bullying behaviour of the men are underlined by the long takes of the silent Kati in close-up, as we hear a barrage

of men's voices in sound off. Finally, we hear the sole female registering her objection to the way the men are treating Kati, and leaving the room in disgust. Finally, Horrath takes over as inquisitor and asks if the father of her child is a member of the party and works on the building site. The juxtaposition of this scene with the committee proceedings against Horrath again points up the contrast between past and present, underlined by Jansen's criticism in the narrative present of both men, Horrath and Bleibtreu for their handling of that earlier inquiry.

The investigation into Trutmann's professional misconduct takes place in the same room as the proceedings against Horrath, but the room is arranged completely differently than in the later inquiry. Defendant and party administrators are situated on a podium in front of the gathered building site workers, facing out into the crowd. Both the seating arrangement and the camerawork emphasise the remoteness of the law-giving authority from the people. Several shots emphasise the distance between the floor and the podium. The public remains silent as Horrath, who is speaking in their name, but single-handedly acting as prosecutor, judge and jury, browbeats, hectors and finally dismisses Trutmann from his post. Bleibtreu only asks for responses from the assembly after the judgement has been passed, and despite Kati's sole, impassioned plea that Trutmann should be given a chance, which is given extra emotional force by the close-up camera shots, Horrath does not modify his judgment.

By contrast, in the case against Horrath the seating arrangements indicate a less confrontational and imposed form of law-making, and party officials play a less dominant role in the proceedings. Ziehmer, a worker on the building site, and Jansen, a non-party member, prevent Bleibtreu condemning

Horrath without even bothering to review his case. For works' party official Bleibtreu the case is a closed one, and he regards the sole function of the meeting as deciding how to word their decision to expel Horrath from the party. Bleibtreu's scathing judgement against Horrath also goes unchallenged by regional secretary Jansen. Ziehmer ridicules Bleibtreu's attempt to pass judgement before holding an investigation, and Hesselbart advocates the need for a full investigation which does not just examine Horrath's role in isolation. The active role of these two figures in launching a proper inquiry signals the need for a more consensual and socially inclusive form of justice and one that takes into account the problems of the individual.

As the session proceeds, wide angle shots of the committee table, taken at a lower angle than similar shots of Kati's hearing, give the impression at times that we, as viewers, are seated around the table and are participants in the unfolding debate. The seating constellation also reflects a slight shift in power relations. Party officials Jansen and Bleibtreu are seated in the dogleg of an L-shaped committee table. From certain angles they seem to dominate the table, but from others they seem a little out on a limb. While it is Ziehmer and Hesselbart who initiate the wider debate, the senior party official adopts an increasingly prominent role in the committee proceedings. However, Jansen's admission, prompted by Ziehmer, that he, too, has made mistakes in his handling of Horrath, represents an important step towards a less authoritarian style of leadership. Like the policeman in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, Jansen acknowledges his own culpability, in this case, after prompting from others.

In the course of the proceedings, the party hardliner Bleibtreu is effectively disempowered. Initially, Ziehmer and Hesselbart block Bleibtreu's attempt to pass judgement on Horrath, Jansen later intervenes in the sequence

following the discussion of Trutmann's role and stops Bleibtreu's renewed attempt to close the discussion. Again the hardliner tries to misappropriate the first person plural pronoun and speak on behalf of the collective. Jansen overrules him, calling, instead, for Balla to be summoned for questioning. Finally, the regional party secretary rejects Bleibtreu's initial judgement, throwing out the charges against the former works' party secretary. It appears he might even be given back his old job, although this is not altogether clear. In the proceedings against Horrath the film seeks to moderate the law and prefigure an order which is legitimised through being recognised by the individual as just and humane. Despite the greater participation from the grass roots, the development in the present level also works to re-establish the authority of the older man, regional secretary Jansen. Power relations have been reformed, rather than transformed.

The new social model is based upon what could be described as 'consultative authoritarianism'.³⁶⁴ The two younger men, who in their different ways challenged Jansen's authority, are integrated into the collective headed by the regional party secretary in the course of the film. Outside the court room the three men, Balla, Jansen and Horrath shake hands, signifying the establishment of a mutually accepted order. The ending of the novel, as Reid observes, is more open in certain respects than the film, as the former ends with Balla still trying to persuade Jansen to reopen the case against Horrath.³⁶⁵ However, in Neutsch's novel the carpenter is turned into a devoted party member, while in the film, as I have mentioned, Balla does not explicitly join

³⁶⁴ Peter Ludz used this term to describe the modified political power structures in the GDR after reforms in the early to mid-1960s. Cited by Christoph Kleßmann, *Zwei Staaten, eine Nation: Deutsche Geschichte 1955-1970* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1988), p. 337.

³⁶⁵ Reid, p. 60.

the party, and he shows no signs of becoming a mere yes man. He continues his gently subversive quipping until the last, while clearly recognising Jansen's authority.

The female character in *Spur der Steine*, as in other DEFA films, such as *Der geteilte Himmel* or *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, seems to represent a utopian ideal, but here there is a failure to find a utopian opening. Unlike the other films there are no family or family-type structures to provide – albeit uneasy – resolutions. The departure of Kati with her baby hangs a question mark over the collective resolution achieved at the building site, forestalling any straightforwardly happy ending. As I mention above, the ending of Neutsch's novel might seem more open in certain respects, the lack of clarity concerning Kati's fate is more significant in the film, for here her role is more foregrounded, while in Neutsch's novel the area party secretary is more dominant than his filmic counterpart. Her disappearance from the waiting room outside the committee rooms and her decision to leave Schkona is plausible from a psychological point of view. In her letter, which is read aloud by Jansen at the end of the film, Kati speaks of the need to start afresh somewhere where she is not constantly reminded of her painful love affair with Horrath. Yet the emotive sight of her empty room would appear to have a symbolic charge that goes over and beyond this.

As a national narrative, *Spur der Steine* is certainly problematic because Kati helps found the new order, but her disappearance leaves it without a mother. Her rejection of either Balla or Horrath as the father of her child would appear to point to continuing deficits in the social order. Despite the readjustment of relations on the building site, the film would still seem to beg the question of how much room there is for the individual in the collective. On

the other hand, the limited closure also functions to back up the legitimacy of the law governing men's behaviour. From a gender point of view it is problematic, because it perpetuates gender stereotypes in its association of the female protagonist with traditional feminine values and puts her ultimately beyond the bounds of the order. Although Balla is ostensibly the chief outlaw, in many ways Kati, the only female working on the building site, is, at the end, the true outsider. Balla's humour and the fact that he remains uncrushed even at the end make him perhaps an easier character to identify with than the victimised Kati.

If the committee proceedings are to be understood as a renegotiation of the social contract then the changes bring little improvement for women. Power is distributed not merely according to age, but also to sex. In all three panels women are massively under-represented and play little or no role in decision-making, though it is the female characters, most notably Kati Klee, who have revealed to the committee members and the viewers the inhumanity of the system. Furthermore, the ending effectively separates once more the spheres of production and reproduction. The narrative does not explore the very real practical problems of the double burden faced by a woman who is both a mother and an employee in a system that has been constructed on the basis of generic male workers. She sets in motion a chain of events that ultimately serves to resolve the disordered state of relations between the male-dominated party and the overwhelmingly male workforce, and to humanise the workings of the male-governed system. It is her Otherness, a quality that derives both from her sexual identity and her gender-distinct values, that challenges and modifies the system, and finally leads to its – partial – regeneration.

Frequently, Westerns end with the departure of the male hero who has helped in the establishment of law and order but who is not himself subsequently integrated into this order. This hero often stands in an ambiguous relationship to the law or to the larger social order, even at the end of the film, because the establishment of order often has required a degree of violence that is incompatible with the values of the community to which it gives rise.³⁶⁶ It could be argued that the Western does not celebrate community, but instead tends to offer a wistful retrospective on a time and space of unfettered male individualism before the establishment of civilisation. *Spur der Steine* offers an interesting deviation from this pattern. Here the male individualist, Balla, can be integrated into the system. Instead, it is the female hero Kati who simply disappears at the end. Whereas in the cowboy film the male hero represents an individualism linked to the past, Kati seems to represent a female subjectivism that is linked with the future.

³⁶⁶ In fact, the indispensability of male individualism in the actual act of nation-building, but the difficulty of integrating this quality in the subsequent order, is, as I have mentioned earlier, something that is problematized in older national narratives, such as Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*.

Conclusion

All four films that I have analysed were directed by men who were committed both to socialism and to the GDR, and regarded film-making as a way of contributing to their development. In the era when these films were made, there were no female DEFA film directors making feature films for adult audiences. Ingrid Reschke, whose career was cut short by her death in a car accident, made her debut *Gegenwartsfilm* in the late 1960s, and, to my knowledge, only two other women went on to direct adult feature films for DEFA before the *Wende*.³⁶⁷ All of the male film-makers are classed as belonging to the second generation of DEFA directors, who began making films for the studio in the 1950s and were in their teens or twenties when the GDR was founded. Within the imagined communities constructed within their films, issues are raised concerning the political, social, cultural and historical identity of the GDR. As cinematic representations, these films also engaged in contemporary discourse about the representation of reality, challenging in various ways paradigms of official film policy. They have been critically acclaimed in some quarters as a result.

These directors were attempting to foster identification for this nascent socialist nation-state, but also to reveal its deficits and steer its development. Central concerns include generational conflict, attitudes towards capitalism and the West, and the transformation of relations at the workplace. History also becomes an increasingly important theme in the later films. They cast a critical look backwards at the deforming character of Stalinism, or tentatively

³⁶⁷ The directors who followed Reschke into the feature film studio were Iris Gusner and Evelyn Schmidt. Bärbl Bergmann, DEFA's first woman film director, worked in children's film. Hannelore Unterberg also produced only children's films.

challenge the SED regime's foundational anti-fascist myth, by acknowledging the existence of former Nazis among the GDR's population, or questioning the relevance of the historical narrative for the future development of the country. The relationship between public and private is another central issue in these films. They also deal with aesthetic and cultural openness. The experimentation with Western genres in itself challenged the party's tendency to demonize all 'alien' influences. Sometimes, as in *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, which points towards the provinciality of GDR culture and also questions the reception of the *Erbe*, issues relating to GDR cultural policy are explored intradiegetically. The later films increasingly problematize the nature of governance in their imagined communities, while still being concerned with creating a sense of belonging.

These male directors were not primarily concerned with a fundamental revision of gender relations, or with female emancipation. That is not to say that issues of sexuality and gender are completely neglected. In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* the evocation of Goethe issues a challenge to SED puritanism, while *Spur der Steine* questions the rigidity of socialist morality. *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, as I have shown, is actually concerned with the restitution of conservative gender values, while the later films, by contrast, tentatively begin to raise the question of the status of women in GDR society – although it is certainly not a core issue. The overriding concern of these films is with masculinity and not femininity. The majority of screen time in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is devoted to tracing the destinies of its three main young male characters, and, as I argue, is fundamentally concerned with the reconstruction of masculinity. In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* the chief protagonist is clearly Peter, and his integration brings an uneasy narrative closure. While *Spur der*

Steine is more multi-perspectival than the other films, the majority of these perspectives are male, and the main female character Kati disappears at the end of the film. Even in *Der geteilte Himmel*, which is based on a novel quite clearly focused around a young woman, the men dominate in the film's dialogue.

Despite the socially revisionist aims of the film-makers, the depiction of gender in these four films is in many respects quite stereotypical. Men are the holders of power, or are the contestants for this power. It is men's work – whether intellectual or manual – that is represented as being of crucial importance in shaping the nation, and their dissent is depicted as particularly threatening. They embody strong creative, or destructive impulses. The state is represented as male, but so are its opponents. Furthermore, male-male relations that are not defined by a shared belief in socialism tend to be depicted as possibly dangerous, as in both Balla's and Meternagel's *Brigade*, or even sexually deviant, as in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*. What is particularly striking about these films is the degree of conflict between the male parties and the ambivalence of many of the male figures. The young men who oppose the powers that be are increasingly divided, as are the male powerholders themselves.

In the banned films the double-edged nature of SED power is increasingly brought to light. While the representative of the state in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* is portrayed in the film in a positive, if paternalistic, light, as the kindly inspector, concerned for the well-being of his 'charges' in their public and their private lives, Anne's father, in the later *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule*, is a more ambivalent character. Like the policeman, he has maternal-paternal characteristics, but he is possessive of his daughter and prone to

vitriolic outbursts, while Peter's head teacher Röhle is authoritarian and almost paranoid. The internal divisions of the older party members are not only associated with their role as representatives of the social order, but also with their relationship to history. These men are the bearers of national history, and its scars. For the older men, their actions and experiences during wartime are pivotal. Former communist fighters, as well as those who have converted to the cause, are haunted by a fear of the return of Nazism.

In turn, the ambivalent depiction of some of the younger men, such as Manfred in *Der geteilte Himmel* and Horrath in *Spur der Steine*, is linked to their experiences of more recent history. Growing up with Stalinism in the early years of the GDR has created disaffection and cynicism, in one case, and moral ambiguity, in the other. The equivocal nature of uncommitted male characters, like Peter and Balla, is also associated with what is depicted as, or is perceived as, their role as potential representatives of the values of another state, namely West Germany, hence the two-edged aspect of their rebellion. The relationship between men and history in these films reveals a traditional identification of the making of national past and future with male historical agency and of men as the representatives of authority and the state. What is perhaps unusual in comparison with traditional national narratives is the degree of conflict between the men within one state.

Given the gaps in what is known about the social history of the GDR, it is difficult to prove or refute these gendered patterns of conformism or rebellion in either the earlier or the later films, and that is ultimately not my task here. However, certain aspects of these films are clearly unrepresentative. In contrast to the plethora of father figures and young men who populate these films, there are strikingly few female characters. Kati and Rita, in particular,

dwell in what is practically a male world. The locations that *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Spur der Steine* centre on, the rolling stock factory and the building site, are traditionally male-dominated and remained largely so in the GDR. Yet, in the East German state as a whole, women, in fact, heavily outnumbered men in the GDR population, particularly in the early years after the war, so this scarcity of women, in particular of older women, does not reflect any sociological reality. In these films most of the father figures are alone or are depicted in isolation, and the central female protagonists are all young.

The film's leading ladies, Angela, Rita, Anne and Kati, range in age from their mid-teens to early twenties. Middle-aged females do appear in *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Spur der Steine*, but, in all but the first film, they are on the very margins. Male characters in all four films are far more differentiated in both age and experience. While the men are frequently scarred by history, the youth of these female protagonists is often synonymous with historical innocence. In two of the cases, they are newcomers to the depicted communities. Yet despite their youth, innocence, and relative scarcity in number, women do not play an insignificant role in these film narratives. As well as articulating social problems, these films seek to affirm the socialist project and, to varying degrees, to legitimise the state. And this is frequently where the women come in.

In contrast to the men, the central female protagonists are almost always valorized. Unlike a lot of the young men, their commitment to the GDR is never really in question. Even Angela, the most politically unaffiliated of the films' four young female protagonists, does not, unlike her male companions, directly challenge state authority or stray across the state boundary. Rita, who

faces the most difficult test of all, travels to West Berlin to see her lover, but chooses her country over her lover and returns to the East. Anne expressly declares her love for the *Republik*. Kati leaves Schkona, but does not hand in her party badge. While the men are represented as being at war with one another, the female characters are typically depicted as being more collectively minded. The young women in the three later films mediate variously between young and old, between suitors and fathers, between men who represent different elements of society and represent different social, political and historical interests.

Using love plots or family-type narratives, these films seek to articulate, and, at least partially, to manage their conflicts and contradictions, representing at the end some form of collective unity. In three of the four films the rebellious young heroes are integrated into the system. In none of their cases is ideological commitment depicted as a prime moving force. Only in *Spur der Steine* do events at the workplace play a role in this process of integration. What is decisive is their attachment to a woman. In *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* Angela offers Dieter good old-fashioned love and the prospect of a happy family life in a state that is depicted as being concerned for the wellbeing of its citizens. But in the later films the female figures, nubile though they may be, are not just important because of their sexual charms. Balla falls in love with Kati because of her superior humanity, integrity and warmth – a warmth that has been missing until then in the work sphere – and, although no relationship comes to pass, he subsequently settles his grievances with the collective. In *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* Anne can be for Peter what her father cannot, namely trusting, tolerant and perceptive to his needs. Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel* cannot retain Manfred, but he is first attracted to her because she is so

unblemished and so good. The male characters are attracted to the female protagonists because they stand for something different from the fathers' generation, or their other male counterparts. Yet frequently the woman also serves to make a link between father and lover, or between lover and the collective – a link that affirms the authority of the state or the system and its historical identity – and at the same time symbolises the glimpse of a better future.

Doris Sommer observes in her study of Latin American literature that the eroticisation of politics is not uncommon in nation-building narratives, noting that 'in Latin America, European foundational fictions sought to overcome political and historical fragmentation through love'.³⁶⁸ What is striking in these films is the tremendous strain that these love relationships are under, reflecting the conflicting interests and symbolic values represented by the characters. Anne's relationship with a young rebel forms at best a – shaky – bridge between the two generations of men, but the attempt to code this affair of the heart as an affair of the state seems oddly artificial and strained. Social reconciliation faces, at times, insuperable odds. Rita in *Der geteilte Himmel* is unable to span the gap between Manfred and her socialist mentors. The lovers break up. Here the father-daughter type relationship, between Rita and Meternagel, is the relationship that carries nation-building significance, for her relationship with the older worker accommodates her in a proletarian tradition and he is linked with her utopian femininity. The loyalty expected of the daughter in the traditional family model is exported into the public sphere.

³⁶⁸ Doris Sommer, 'Irresistible Romance: The Foundational Fictions of Latin America', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 71-98 (p. 84).

Only in *Spur der Steine* is Kati's idealistic commitment to socialism and to the GDR no longer linked to any existing male power structure. Kati's father, a party big-wig, is nothing but a footnote in Frank Beyer's film. In Erik Neutsch's novel, by contrast, the young engineer is reconciled with her father in the course of the narrative after spurning him for his hypocrisy. Moreover, the young protagonist ultimately rejects both of her potential partners, Horrath and Balla, who represent contrasting types of patriarchal order. The dislocation of the female figure from male power structures that we see at the end of Beyer's *Spur der Steine* foreshadows later developments in the *Gegenwartsfilme* of the 1970s and 1980s, where non-conformist female characters tend not to form or not to retain stable links with their fathers or their partners, and question the prevailing values of society.

The uneasy resolutions of the 1960s films show the difficulty of reconciling humanistic socialist ideals with existing power structures, as well as bringing together the host of other competing values and interests articulated in the course of their narratives. They also reveal the problematic aspect of using the family or family-type structures to represent a socialist state that was keen to emphasise the importance of the work collective and to represent itself as an advocate of equal rights for women and the guarantor of ostensibly egalitarian social relations. In nineteenth-century Europe and Latin America the bourgeois family provided a better model for the nation, owing to the greater clarity in division of labour between men and women, sharper distinctions between public and private spheres, and more clearly established social and sexual hierarchies. Tensions between public and private needs in the GDR are evident in poignant filmic depictions of empty private spaces and broken relationships, and the concurrent impetus to relocate the protagonists in

the public sphere. Sometimes these narratives even leave sexuality – both for pleasure and for reproductive ends – unintegrated into the social order. Kati in *Spur der Steine*, for example, has an unfulfilling relationship with the party secretary, introduces a measure of humanity into the workplace, and then departs alone with her baby for points unknown.

In narrative terms both the youth and the relative isolation of the central female figures in these films enable them to better serve as the Other. Women have model character, but this means at times they are consigned to a different kind of ‘reality’. Removed from the narrative flow, they are iconized, transformed into transhistorical symbols of unity, integrity and humanity. This is difficult to pin down precisely because abstractness and lack of differentiation are what allow the female characters to slip into this role. In contrast, some of the earlier GDR films, like *Frauenschicksale*, *Bürgermeister Anna*, or *Eine alte Liebe*, placed more emphasis upon women’s agency rather than merely their symbolic value.³⁶⁹ *Frauenschicksale* also clearly alludes to women’s statistical over-representation in post-war Germany, and their complicity in the war.³⁷⁰ In this selection of films women’s contribution to social development through their role in the labour force and in the home is somewhat obfuscated. The absence of older female figures, and the idealization of the younger ones, also screens out issues involving women’s participation in the Nazi regime. Instead the films frequently present us with a vision of Woman as a source of potentially utopian opening. In the later woman’s films of the 1970s and 1980s the female protagonists gain more personal contours

³⁶⁹ *Bürgermeister Anna* was directed by Hans Müller and produced in 1950

³⁷⁰ In contrast, in *Bürgermeister Anna* men are blamed for causing the war.

but still are frequently associated with symbolic values that have been traditionally attributed to women.

The films of the middle period were the last of their kind in their explicit criticism of the political and economic system. Whatever one's judgement about the ideological or aesthetic success of the films that I have been looking at, one should acknowledge the film-makers' genuine desire to challenge and reform the status quo while facing considerable restraints. The state intervention in 1965/66, which led to the banning of two of the films I have analysed, has been depicted as an act from which DEFA never truly recovered, putting an end to the second wave of critical and aesthetically innovative film-making that had begun in the studio in the early 1960s. This forced some talented directors out of the feature film studio for several years or, in the case of Jürgen Böttcher, for ever, and made self-censorship endemic.³⁷¹ Looking back, some have even implied that the GDR and socialism might have survived had these so-called 'Rabbit' films, named after Kurt Maetzig's 1965 production *Das Kaninchen bin ich*, been allowed to appear.³⁷² The generational tensions portrayed in these films certainly did reflect a problem that beset the GDR until its demise. It is one that is regarded as pivotal by some. Heinz Kersten, for example, writes: 'Daß man sich damals nicht darum kümmerte und nicht ernst nahm, was eine neue Generation im Kopf hatte, führte zum Verlust dessen, was DDR-Filmmacher bewahren wollten – durch 'positive' Kritik.'³⁷³

³⁷¹ See Klaus Wischnewski, 'Verbotene Filme: Aufbruch und Absturz: der DEFA-Spielfilm zwischen 1961 und 1966', in *Brüche, Krisen, Wendepunkte: Neubefragung von DDR-Geschichte*, ed. by Jochen Černý (Leipzig: Urania Verlag, 1990), pp. 228-245.

³⁷² See Wischnewski, 'Verbotene Filme', p. 244, and the film-maker Günter Stahnke's comments in 'Es ist zum Heulen', *Berlinale Tip*, 15-21 February 1990.

³⁷³ Heinz Kersten, 'Spuren der Babelsberger Inquisition: Die "Kaninchenfilme" der DEFA', in *Berlin um die Ecke; Jahrgang 45; Karla; Wenn du groß bist, lieber Adam; Dokumentation*

Yet post-*Wende* claims from some quarters that films like *Spur der Steine* or the other banned films might have saved socialism, had they only been allowed to go on general release, seem wildly over-stated for four reasons. Firstly, the effect that these films might have had upon audiences at the time can only remain speculation. Such claims seem to attribute an inflated significance not only to cinema *per se*, but perhaps more specifically to DEFA cinema at this particular juncture. Wolfgang Gersch is one film critic who questions the amount of public attention that these films with their socialist messages would have received at the time, commenting:

[S]ie [die Entwicklung zu den Filmen von 1965/66] vollzog sich in einer isolierten Sphäre, in der man dem Sozialismus anhing und aus der die Mehrheit keine Nachrichten für sich erwartete. Und es ist nicht sicher, daß diese Mehrheit die Filme als die ihren akzeptiert hätte, die, gerade erst aufgeführt, beendet oder zumeist noch in Arbeit, in der Folge des 11. Parteiplenums in den Bunkern verschwanden. Die eigentliche Groteske wurde durch einen von Wischniewski zitierten tschechischen Regisseur bezeichnet: "Das Schlimmste an eurem 11. Plenum ist, man hat zwölf Filme verboten, und es hat keiner gemerkt." ³⁷⁴

At another point he suggests that the stresses and strains between affirmation and critique that fracture some of these films would not necessarily have ensured their popular appeal.³⁷⁵ Secondly, it is naïve to expect any direct one-to-one relationship between culture and society. While culture can influence society, it can hardly change society in and of itself. This was the trap that the SED leadership itself fell into. Thirdly, such claims bracket out a host of structural problems within GDR

einer verlorenen Zeit – DEFA Filme von 1965/66 (Remscheid: Kinder- und Jugendfilmzentrum in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1994), pp. 4-6 (p. 4) (reprint of article from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1 August 1990). For a more in-depth discussion of the issue of generational tension in the GDR and in DEFA film, see Barton Byg, 'Generational Conflict and Historical Continuity in GDR Film', in *Framing the Past: The Historiography of German Cinema and Television*, ed. by Bruce A. Murray and Christopher J. Wickham (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), pp. 197-219.

³⁷⁴ Wolfgang Gersch, 'Film in der DDR: Die verlorene Alternative', in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, ed. by Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes and Hans Helmut Prinzler (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), pp. 323-364 (p. 342).

³⁷⁵ See Gersch, 'Film', p. 351.

socialism, as well as geo-political considerations.³⁷⁶ Fourthly, the hypothesis tends to ignore the institutional framework within which films were produced in the GDR. Although by the mid-sixties film-makers had gained a degree of autonomy that they never managed to achieve again, they remained at the mercy of changes of political course. Despite the film-makers' good intentions from the perspective of socialism, two out of these four films were banned by the GDR authorities, while the earlier *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* was given a general release, but quickly fell into disrepute and was denounced at the film-makers' conference of 1958. Only *Der geteilte Himmel* was both a lasting 'critical' and popular success. Lastly, as my analysis of the filmic narratives has shown, the revisionist films of DEFA's middle period, including *Denk bloß nicht, ich heule* and *Spur der Steine*, were constantly replicating conservative gender paradigms. Even if unconscious, this narrative recourse to gender paradigms to manage the contradictions and conflicts of the GDR is further testament to flaws within socialism and the tenacity of gender roles. Any speculation that these films might have saved socialism can only beg the question: Whose socialism? Now, however, we are living in a post-socialist age, and the political world of which the GDR was a part has gone. Looking back, these films stand as striking documents of this culture, and offer a fascinating insight into the tensions of the time.

³⁷⁶ Karen Ruoff Kramer also calls the validity of these claims into question in 'Representations', p. 133.

Appendix: Plot summaries

Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser

Berlin Ecke - Schönhauser centres on the misadventures of the East Berlin teenagers Dieter, Angela, Karl-Heinz and Kohle, a group of disaffected youngsters who hang out together on the street in the proletarian neighbourhood of Prenzlauer Berg. All have difficulties at home and all end up in various kinds of trouble. Middle-class Karl-Heinz, who is involved in various criminal activities in the West, is the catalyst for the chain of events which lead Kohle and Dieter to flee the GDR. When Karl-Heinz dares Kohle to break a streetlight for a West Mark but fails to pay up, a confrontation ensues between the three young men. Believing that they have killed Karl-Heinz, Dieter and Kohle flee to West Berlin where they end up in a refugee camp. Meanwhile, Karl-Heinz gets involved in crimes of escalating seriousness, and finally kills a man. Back in East Berlin, Angela discovers that she is pregnant by Dieter. Unable to endure her mother's reproaches, Angela leaves home. She is later discovered wandering the streets by Dieter's brother, who takes her in. The narrative is framed by Dieter's homecoming to East Berlin following Kohle's death due to accidental poisoning and Karl-Heinz's arrest by the police for manslaughter. After helping the police inspector compile a report on the matter, Dieter goes to visit Angela, who has in the meantime moved back in with her mother. The final image shows Dieter waiting, poised on the threshold between the street and the courtyard of the apartment block where Angela lives with her mother, as his girlfriend gets ready to go out with him.

Der geteilte Himmel

Der geteilte Himmel is focused around the figure of a young woman, Rita, and her coming to terms with the loss of her lover Manfred, who leaves the GDR for the West. It is also the story of Rita's growing personal commitment to the GDR and its socialist project. The film has a complex double narrative structure. The narrative present traces her recovery from a nervous breakdown. The narrative past is intended to constitute her memories of the events that led up to this breakdown. From her sick bed, Rita thinks back to the time when she first met her lover and moved from the country to the city to join him and start teacher training college. The action shows Rita confronting, at first-hand, the problems of the socialist workplace in a rolling stock factory where she has a holiday job, and experiencing conflict at college. In Manfred's family home, too, she encounters the strained relations between her lover and his parents. At first Rita finds refuge from outside pressures in her personal life, but her relationship with Manfred becomes increasingly difficult as he becomes more and more disillusioned with life in the GDR. Finally, the young scientist fails to return from a trip to West Berlin. Rita decides to visit him there, but quickly realises that she cannot leave the GDR for good, for her belief in the socialist cause and her bonds to the collective are too strong. At both work and college she has forged close relationships: at the rolling stock factory with the foreman Meternagel and the manager Wendland and at the teacher training college with Schwarzenbach, one of the teachers. Shortly after making the decision to return to the East, she collapses at work. The narrative present traces Rita's recovery after her breakdown, and her move from her mother's home in the country back to the city. From her sick bed she reflects upon the events of the past, presented in the form of flashbacks. Upon her recovery she moves out of Manfred's former flat and goes to live with Meternagel.

Denk bloß nicht, ich heule

Denk bloß nicht, ich heule is the story of the renegade teenager Peter and his quest for identity. Expelled from school by a dogmatic head teacher for writing a provocative essay and unwilling to take up a job in a farming collective, Peter takes his dying father's advice to go out and live life to the full. With a wad of inherited money in his pocket, Peter wanders aimlessly through Weimar, window shopping and eyeing up women. By chance, he meets and spends the day with Anne, the daughter of the chairman of a local farming collective. Though drawn to his uncompromising stance towards hypocrisy, she is not impressed by his attempts to shower her with gifts, and leaves for home. He passes the evening with rabble-rousing, petty criminal associates, gets hopelessly drunk and spends his inheritance. Shortly afterwards he bumps into his ex-girlfriend Uschi, his head teacher's daughter. He decides to try to win her back. The beginning of the second stage in Peter's life journey is marked by the chance discovery that he is adopted. After leaving home and spending the night on a park bench, Peter bumps into Anne again. The couple appear to be becoming closer, but the young rebel is still interested in Uschi. Anne decides to try to help him prepare for his exams outside school. However, both Peter and Anne face opposition from her father. Peter goes back to school to persuade his head teacher to allow him to sit the exams, but his request is rejected. After enlisting his criminal companions in the city to help him get his own back on the head teacher, the young rebel is appalled when they actually set upon Röhle. He gets beaten up himself when he goes to the teacher's defence. Consequently, he severs his ties with his associates from the city and approaches Anne's father to convince him of his love for Anne. The film's ending signals Peter's uneasy integration into the village community.

Spur der Steine

Spur der Steine is set on an industrial construction site near the fictional town of Schkona and its action focuses on the relationship between Hannes Balla, the head of the most productive, but also the most disorderly work team on the building site, and two newcomers, a young engineer called Kati Klee and Werner Horrath, the works' party secretary. In flashback, the film relates the interlocking tales of the joint struggle of the engineer and the party secretary, who are both convinced socialists, to win over Balla, and the development of their secret love affair. Kati's relationship with the married party secretary results in her becoming pregnant, sparking a scandal on the building site and a witch-hunt to find out who is the father of her child. The affair leads to their growing estrangement because Werner fails to make a choice between Kati and his wife, and finally Kati breaks off with him. Their clandestine relationship also disrupts the growing relationship of trust and respect between the two men when Balla, who is smitten with Kati, gets wind of the affair. Horrath starts to lose a grip on the management of the building site because of his emotional crisis and his loss of Balla's support. Finally, he faces the threat of being thrown out of the party for his moral and ideological failings after he owns up to the relationship with Kati. The film starts during committee proceedings in which his former deputy, Bleibtreu, announces Horrath's expulsion from the party. However, a proper investigation is declared necessary and the ongoing proceedings form the framework for the filmic flashbacks. At the end of the inquiry, the party boss Jansen rejects Bleibtreu's initial decision and rehabilitates Horrath. In the final sequence a reconciliation is effected between the three men. The ending is problematized, however, by the discovery that Kati and her child have left town to make a fresh start elsewhere.

Abbreviations

CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
BRD	Bundesrepublik Deutschland
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik
DEFA	Deutsche Filmaktiengesellschaft
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HV-Film	Hauptverwaltung Film
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft
NVA	Nationale Volksarmee
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
Ufa	Universum-Film AG
ZK	Zentralkomitee

Filmography

All films listed here were produced by DEFA save those marked with an abbreviation denoting another country of origin or production company. FR=France, GB=Great Britain. GER=Germany, ITA=Italy, USA=United States. YP.=Year of Production, YR.=Year of Release.

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